THE LIGHT DIVINE

IN PARABLE AND ALLEGORY

O'REILLY

OCT 6 1959

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THE LIGHT DIVINE

IN

PARABLE AND ALLEGORY

Patrick J. O'Reilly P.P.

THE LIGHT DIVINE
IN PARABLE AND ALLEGORY

THOUGHTS FOR CATHOLICS
AND NON-CATHOLICS

BY

REV. PATRICK J. O'REILLY, S. J.
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BY

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS
CHICAGO
1931

Imprimi potest:

JOSEPH M. PIET, S. J.

Prep. Prov. Californiae

Imprimatur:

✠ GEORGIUS CARDINALIS MUNDELEIN

Archiepiscopus Chicagiensis

First Impression, July 31, 1930
Second Impression, November 15, 1930
Third Impression, November 30, 1931

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

To the Veteran Shepherd of the Northland

Right Rev. Joseph R. Crimont, S.J., D.D.

Vicar Apostolic of Alaska

This Little Book

Is Devotedly Inscribed

as a Tribute of Grateful Appreciation

from the Author

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OCT 6 1959

FOREWORD

And with many such parables, He spoke to them the word according as they were able to hear (Mark 4:33). Orientals; simple, uneducated, poor—such the people that listened to their Savior speaking in parables, simple stories culled from the ordinary events of life. A prudent Father it was, teaching His children the simple truths of His kingdom.

Yet these parables, so artless in form, are, as St. Jerome says, shallow enough for a lamb to bathe and deep enough for an elephant to swim; so the scribe, learned in the kingdom of heaven, can discover and bring forth from them new things and old. This treasure-trove has never been exhausted, and it is well for us that the author of this book has again explored its depths.

The writer of these essays has preached in season and out of season the precious truths he now expounds. His life has been spent going from church to church—and who on the Pacific Coast has not heard him? By reason of his life's work he is experienced in those beautiful stories of our Savior.

From within the covers of this book, then, the voice of the eloquent preacher goes forth, and the attentive reader will hear in spirit the spoken word. As from the facets of the diamond, he will see reflected the beauties of Paradise, truths ancient and ever new.

✠ Robert J. Armstrong
Bishop of Sacramento

Sacramento, California
Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1929

PREFACE

In an age of doctrinal production along many lines of spiritual worth, it may seem superfluous to place the present work before the public. There is, however, a strong incentive to break ground anew, even in furrows that have been ploughed before with satisfactory results. This is especially true in the field of divine revelation.

In choosing this analogy, we observe that, when the steel-tipped plow-share cleaves the green sward, turning over the buried layers of earth to the air and light of day, the absorbing process in the soil, combining with these energies, becomes at once active in the production of multiform plant life. This holds equally well in the field of faith, where the research for spiritual supplies yields rich returns for the nourishment of the soul.

Often, indeed, have we heard that the wealth of light and color of the sun's rays is reflected in the rainbow. So, too, is the splendor of the Divine Sun reflected in parable and allegory by Him who is *the Light of the World* (John 8:12); for like "words to the wise," these little stories illuminate with divine rays the lessons of heavenly wisdom for every phase of man's spiritual life. For each one of them, robed in its own specific coloring, Christ throws light on a vital object lesson, for it is principally in them that He has revealed Himself as *the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6), to guide the passing wayfarer treading with wary step the *strait way that leadeth to life* (Matt. 7:14). Precisely because of this has the author chosen the title "The Light Divine in Parable and Allegory." His object is to unfold their

hidden treasure of spiritual thought, the depth and sublimity of which no mind can fathom, but whose lesson of moral worth a child can understand. While aiming at a definite measure of completeness in dealing with his subject, he has sought, at the same time, to avoid exegetical treatment of questions that might appear too abstruse.

With this end in view he gives expression to the hope that the following pages may awaken in the reader a greater interest in Him of whom the multitude cried out: *Never did man speak like this man* (John 7:46).

Here the writer wishes to thank the Rt. Rev. Robert J. Armstrong, D. D., Bishop of Sacramento, for writing the Introduction, and the Rt. Rev. Augustin F. Schinner, D. D., first Bishop of Spokane, for reviewing the manuscript. An acknowledgment is also made to Gonzaga University, where, as lecturer on the philosophy of religion, the author addressed the student body on the subject matter of his book.

Finally, a note of grateful appreciation is given to the generous friend who so kindly defrayed the expense of the illustrations.

THE AUTHOR

Fairbanks, Alaska
Feast of Christ the King, 1929

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Foreword	ix
	Preface	xi
I.	The Kingship of Christ (Prologue)	1
II.	Seeding the World	18
III.	While the Sower Slept	31
IV.	Small Beginnings	46
V.	Hidden Powers	61
VI.	Treasure-Trove	75
VII.	A Costly Sacrifice	91
VIII.	A Marvelous Contrivance	109
IX.	At the End of the Day	121
X.	The Prayer that Availeth	135
XI.	A Stony Heart	148
XII.	Injustice in High Places	161
XIII.	Contrasting Contrasts	177
XIV.	True Philanthropy	196
XV.	The Gold of the Heart	212
XVI.	Doctors in Israel	226
XVII.	The Light of the World	239
XVIII.	Lost and Found	257
XIX.	In a Far Country	275
XX.	A Divine Allegory (Epilogue)	298
	Bibliography	321

CHAPTER I

Prologue

The Kingship of Christ

Traditional knowledge of Christ's kingship. Contacts between the Gentiles and Israelites. The Kings from the East. King Herod. Prophets and prophecies in the Ancient Covenant. Revelation of the messianic kingship in the Annunciation. Significance of kingship in Christ. Not acquired by contingent causes. The hypostatic union. Napoleon's testimony. Christ's claim at the court of Pilate. The apocalyptic vision of the Seer of Patmos. A final proclamation of the divine kingship.

THE brilliant luminary that guided the Wise Men from the lands of the East to seek the newborn King of the Jews at Bethlehem was a fitting symbol of His messianic origin. *We have seen,* they said, *His star in the East, and are come to adore Him* (Matt. 2:2). Even in the remote periods of antiquity, but especially during the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the people of Israel came in contact with the nations of the Eastern world; wherefore, it is not unlikely that the prophecies relating to the messianic King of the Jews were known to the gentiles. The prediction of the gentile prophet Balaam referring to the star of the messianic King was known to both Jews and gentiles. *A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a scepter shall spring up from Israel. . . . . Out of Jacob shall He come that shall rule* (Num. 24:17-19). There can be no doubt that the Wise Men connected the appearance of the unusual star they had seen in the East with this ancient prophecy.

Besides this source of information traditional in the East, it is not at all improbable that the Wise Men were given a special inspiration to go, in the name of the gen-

tile world, to welcome the Christ-King as soon as His star should appear in their own country. Be this as it may, we are now actually dealing with the fact that His star did unmistakably appear to guide their course from Persia or Chaldea into the land of Palestine, where in the palace of King Herod they were given official information that the messianic King of the Jews was to be born in Bethlehem according to the prophecy of Micheas. *When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him. And King Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet* (Matt.2:1-4). The prophecy of Micheas reads thus: *And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity* (Mich. 5:2).

Having read the prophecy from the ancient scroll of Micheas, the Kings were told that the birthplace of the newborn King of the Jews is Bethlehem. The Sanhedrin had thus accomplished its appointed service of making known the natal city of the King they had come to seek. Then, leaving the palace of King Herod, the miraculous star again appeared to them, guiding their way to Bethlehem, until it stood over the place where the Child was. *And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary His mother, and falling down they adored Him; and*

ADORATION OF THE WISE MEN

opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). But why this lavish outlay: the princely train, the ingots of pure gold, the frankincense and costly spices? Why the miraculous star in the heavens? All this portrays, in no uncertain way, the distinguishing prerogatives of the newly born Child: His messianic kingship, His sovereign dignity.

It was indeed befitting that kings should come to pay their homage to the King of kings. The very gifts they offered were truly symbolic of the royal priesthood in Christ, and typify a spiritual mystery which is deeply significant. By the offering of gold the Wise Men acknowledged Christ's royal sovereignty; by the frankincense His divine claim to the Godhead; and by the myrrh the august mystery of the Incarnation in the person of Christ the Redeemer. This triple offering of such choice and costly gifts furnishes a true indication of what the Eastern Kings discovered in the Christ-King—His divine and priestly character together with His royal dignity.

The Kings from the East realized that the divine Infant, born in the chill of the manger at Bethlehem, was the God of heaven, the Author of all life, the Source of all light. For even in the helpless condition in which He lay, by His wisdom and His power He was upholding the universe, perpetuating the angelic life of the hosts of heaven, measuring the atoms, and poising the myriad suns of space. There within the narrow confines of a stable it was this very Child who arched the vault of heaven and set therein the lamps of night; it was He who sitteth on the great white throne, that ruleth over the hosts of angels. He it was who, in the language of the Scriptures, walketh on the pavements of heaven, whose feet are clothed with the stars, in whose presence

the hills bow low, and beneath whose feet the mountains turn into dust. Within the tiny brain of this Christ-Child is the divine Intellect whose intelligence knows all things, for His is the knowledge of the all-knowing God.

The major and minor prophets in the dispensation of the Ancient Covenant had clearly foretold the kingship of the Messias. For full one thousand years before His birth sovereignty was predicted of Him. King David, in his usual poetic strain, speaks of His divine appointment: *But I am appointed king by Him over Sion His holy mountain, preaching His commandment. The Lord hath said to Me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession* (Ps. 2:6-8). And the Royal Prophet continues in admiration and wonder: *Thou art beautiful above the sons of men . . . . With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign. . . . . Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows* (Ps. 44:3-8).

What a glorious prospect was unfolded before the Royal Prophet! A kingdom was to be established by his lineal Descendant, which should enjoy universal sway over the most distant parts of the earth, unbounded and unchecked by either political limitations or those natural limits that mark off the monarchies of the universe. When this glowing prospect opened up to David in the days of his prosperity, he might easily scan the future and rest with prophetic eye upon the time when the scep-

ter would depart from the house of Juda and its utter ruin seem almost accomplished. But no sooner did ruin overtake the kingdom of Israel, and the dissolution of her dynasty become a fact through idolatry and immorality, than the prophecies of the messianic kingdom became more pointed, and tended with greater clarity to dispel the encircling gloom.

"When Jeremias sat upon the ruins of Jerusalem, and wept over the mingled ashes of its palace and its temple, he still considered them only as the funeral pile of a degenerate dynasty and a corrupted worship, from which, after a few years, should arise, like the phoenix, a faithful Monarch to restore and perpetuate the kingdom and the priesthood." *Behold, the days shall come,* he exclaimed by command of God, *and I will raise up to David a just branch: and a King shall reign and be wise: and this is the name that they shall call him: The Lord our just one* (Jer. 23:5-6). Now the prophecies seem to take on a more marked significance. The reign of the future Messias is divinely associated with the foundation and extension of a new religion, and all those characteristics of unity, of government, of universality of dominion, of perpetuity of duration, which in earlier prophecy distinguished the Descendant of David, are transferred to that religious system, which it is shown to have denoted. *And it shall come to pass in that day,* says Zacharias, *that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem* to the four quarters of the globe, *and the Lord shall be King over all the earth . . . . In that day there shall be one Lord, and His name shall be one. . . . . And all they that be left of all nations . . . . shall go up . . . . to adore their King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles* (Zac. 14:8-16).

Isaias, the renowned Seer of Israel, speaks of the divine Child in a prophecy so comprehensive as to desire nothing further for the perfect fulfillment of His divine mission. *For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: He shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom; to establish and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and forever* (Isa. 9:6-7). Then comes Daniel, who in his sublime mysticism succeeds Isaias in visualizing the universal reign of Christ together with the eternal duration of His messianic kingdom. Thus he describes the vision: *I beheld therefore in the vision of the night, and lo, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him: His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and His kingdom that shall not be destroyed* (Dan. 7:13-14).

Zacharias fills in the scroll of prophecy by his graphic forecast of the manner in which Christ is to make His solemn entry as the promised King of Israel. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Savior: He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass* (Zach. 9:9).

All the prophecies concerning the messianic reign of the Redeemer have this in common: that Christ is a true King, a Ruler, a Prince of His people. And those prophe-

cies were all literally fulfilled in Him, though in a manner totally different from the anticipations of the worldly-minded Jews. His advent was that of a King, but a King of heaven. His star shone in the heavens over His infant cradle in Bethlehem, but there was no pomp of newly born royalty; there was no pretense to an earthly sovereignity; and much less was there any indication of delivering the Jewish nation from the yoke of her Roman oppressors. Yet, withal, the coming of the Christ was heralded to His Blessed Mother as that of a great King; for, even before His birth, she was informed by heaven's high representative, the Archangel Gabriel, that *the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever* (Luke 1:32).

Were we to take the meaning of "king" and "kingdom" only in the restricted sense in which those terms are understood, then it may appear to superficial minds that Christ's claim is unwarranted; but when we consider the correct meaning of His divine claim, even from a human standpoint, His title is founded on the best of reasons, and His kingdom is established on the most substantial basis. The title of king denotes a sovereign invested with supreme authority over a nation, country, or people. Sovereignty comprises three distinct, correlative functions: legislative, judicial, and executive, which taken collectively constitute the supreme power of jurisdiction through the establishment of organized government. This regal power with its various functions may be either secular or spiritual; one is for man's temporal, the other is for his spiritual, weal. The kingdom of Christ is principally spiritual, and as such will continue unto the end of time; yea, and throughout the endless aeons of eternity.

Under God, Christ is the Lawgiver supreme; hence all without exception are bound to accept His legislation, for He is the final Arbiter over mankind. *Neither does the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son* (John 5:22). He is, therefore, the sovereign Executive whose laws are inviolable and from whose court there is no appeal. Christ as God is a King. But Christ as man is also a King; and in matter of fact it is to Christ as man that His kingship was predicted in the Ancient Covenant. He is spoken of by the prophets as the Scepter that would spring up in Israel, the Royal Scion who would come forth from the root of Jesse to receive from His Father the inheritance of the Gentiles. He is the Lord spoken of by David who should sit as a King on the right hand of Jehovah, His eternal Father (Ps. 109:1).

Now, speaking of the kingdoms founded by the might of man, the Prophet Daniel is inspired to compare their short-lived greatness with the power of that universal kingdom which is built on the enduring kingship of Christ. *But in the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand forever* (Dan. 2:44). Thus, in one prophecy after another, Christ as man is the King who is appointed to rule the nations of the earth, of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

The divine kingship follows also from the inseparable union between the two natures in the one Person, Christ. He is the God-Man, the Man-Christ. This inseparable union, which is designated by theologians as hypostatic, gives Him supreme power over angels and men. *And let*

all the angels of God and all the kings of the earth adore Him (Ps. 96:7; 71:11). *God,* says St. Paul, *hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father* (Phil. 2:9-11). From this inseparable union of the two natures in Christ comes also the prerogative of His divine kingship over all men by right of conquest. Since He has conquered all the powers of darkness, we are in consequence the legitimate spoils of His victory over Satan. Hence we are the children of a ransomed race purchased at the tremendous cost of His sufferings and death. *Thou hast redeemed us to God, in Thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom* (Apoc. 5:9). *For you are bought with a great price* (I Cor. 6:20), exclaims St. Paul; and St. Peter writes: *You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver . . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled* (I Peter 1:18-19).

Reviewing the many scriptural documents bearing on the kingship of Christ, we realize at once the divine origin from which it springs. First of all we behold its source. It was not purchased with gold nor seized by force of violence; and neither has it sprung into existence at the volition of subjects who have chosen their Ruler, since it is eternal and antedates them. It is not an acquired kingship that has come through the instrumentality or efficiency of contingent causes, but it is inherent in the Person of the God-Man. Christ is, therefore, a King because His kingship is intrinsic and personal to

Himself as the head of the human race; because He possesses in Himself the source and unction of all kingship; for He is *King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19: 16).

We behold, too, the extent and duration of His kingship. Man-made kings are the creations of time. Today, they are. Tomorrow, they are not. As a rule they succeed to sovereignty late in life, while it not seldom happens that the steps to the royal throne are stained with the guilt of shedding innocent blood. But the reign of Christ begins at once; it was recognized at His birth, for the angels sang with royal acclaim: *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* (Luke 2:14). The shepherds from the Judean hills came to pay their homage at His cradle, and from lands afar came the Kings of the East offering revenues of gold in token of being His royal vassals. Though He was born in another man's stable, and years later was buried in another man's grave, yet to Him, and to Him alone, belonged all the gold that pays for lodging both the living and the dead. Hence He is the rightful Lord of all men and all things. He is the Lord of the stars of heaven, for they obey His call. He is the Lord of men, enemies and friends: the former tremble at the news of His birth, the latter rally around His manger-throne, as Jewish peasants and Gentile kings, to acknowledge His universal sovereignty over the dual race of men.

Isaias with marvelous illumination forecasts the imperishable glory of the messianic kingdom: *Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth and a mist the people: but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light and*

kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, and the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Median and Epha: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense and showing forth praise to the Lord (Isa. 60:1-6).

From every point of view the kingship of Christ is indeed glorious; for He is the source, center, and end of all that leads to true glory. Being eternal in His origin, and divine and human in a dual nature, He possesses in Himself the royal prerogative of the eternal priesthood to bestow on mankind the graces of the redemption; and from the ends of the earth, from paganism and Judaism, come the acknowledgment and homage justly due to His messianic kingship. Even from the modern world of later days comes the same trenchant acknowledgment of bygone ages now rolled up in the scroll of time. The memorable words of the immortal Napoleon at St. Helena after his downfall are well known: "Alexander, Caesar, and I myself have established great empires. Those empires have passed away. Our names are living still in the memory of man. Our names are dead to the world of action. There is one name as living as when the Christ first spoke. His empire is now as secure as when He sent His apostles forth to conquer the minds and hearts of men. Yet He demands what no other man could dare demand. He demands not merely the worship of men but all their love. He obtains it. Millions have died

for Him. Millions would die for Him today. Christ is Conqueror. Christ is King. His name is a living light, a living power, a living fact."

And in the darkest hours of His apparent defeat, the royal title, the one to which He clung with such open candor, was His divine kingship. Do you remember how, in the language of prophecy, He was compared to a worm and no man? How, when bruised almost out of human shape, He looked the part of a leper (Isa. 53:4)? Do you remember the cast-off purple mantle that was flung on His lacerated shoulders, the sceptered reed that was held in His manacled hand, and the crown of mock-royalty that was pressed deep into His bleeding brow? Do you remember it all? Yea! In that awful hour of satanic pride and divine humiliation, when Rome's imperial magistrate frowned upon the august Mock-King and with ironical gesture asked of Him: "What, art Thou a king?" calm and majestic came the candid answer, the only answer that could come: *Thou sayest that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world* (John 18:37).

Kingship indeed is His, and that, too, by right divine; and the acknowledgment of it is a just obligation incumbent on each of us, on you and on me, on every child of the human race; on him into whose nostrils the breath of life was first blown, as on him who will be the last to depart this life in the future cycles of time. We are also made to realize His divine claim in that most appealing prayer, the Pater Noster, when, day by day, the priest at the altar recites Christ's own prayer, reminding the faithful to pray for the advent of His kingdom: *Thy kingdom come.* In matter of fact Christ has so many titles to His divine claim that we are rather at a loss to

know from which to select, like the lens of the human eye which, at midday, is often incapable of centralizing and focusing the ocean of light with which it is flooded, not because of too little light, but of too much. Thus, too, it is that in our age of boasting enlightment, we meet with men who deny Christ's claim to divinity and messianic kingship; because, as the Apostle remarked of the men of his day, *we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness* (I Cor. 1:23). They cannot see any more than the eye of a bat can see the noontide sun.

Christ is King in His divine nature, being *King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16). He is King also in His human nature, being appointed so by His Father (Ps. 2:6). He is King as the Maker of all things, *for without Him was made nothing that was made* (John 1:3). He is King as upholding all things, for He upholdeth *all things by the word of His power* (Heb. 1:3). He is King by right of domination, for *Thou hast subjected all things under His feet* (Heb. 2:8). He is King by right of conquest for He Himself said: *I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). He is King by right of purchase: *For you are bought with a great price* (I Cor. 6:20). He is King by right of dowry, for *the Father . . . . hath given all things into His hands* (John 3:35). He is King by right of power, for He declared: *All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth* (Matt. 28:18). He is King by right of inheritance, *for His Son . . . . He hath appointed heir of all things* (Heb. 1:2). He is King in His birth, for the three Kings of the East asked: *Where is He that is born King of the Jews* (Matt. 2:2)? He is King in His mortal life, for Nathaniel said: *Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel* (John 1:49). He

is King by the acclamation of His Jewish countrymen, who at His solemn triumph into Jerusalem, exclaimed: *Hosanna to the son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest* (Matt. 21:9). He is King by the verdict of the Roman Governor who officially said to the Jews: *Shall I crucify your King* (John 19:15)? He is King by the voice of the mighty God, the high King of heaven, who once on Jordan's banks and again on Thabor's Mount solemnly proclaimed: *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matt. 3:17). Finally, He is King in His death, for on the Cross was inscribed His royal title, *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* (John 19:19). He is King forever, for *of His kingdom there shall be no end* (Luke 1:33).

But the material atheist, as the modern scoffer, may, doubtless, retort that such kingly titles were uttered in derision by Pilate, in mockery by Herod, and in withering scorn by the Jewish rabble. Let it be so. But let us go on record now by stating that no matter what spirit actuated their utterance, it was nothing less than the absolute truth which they then expressed. True, indeed, there was blasphemous irony and spiteful derision when the scoffing rabble yelled their raucous shouts in challenging the Christ-King to come down from the Cross; but, just because He is a King, He will not descend from His throne. Not His to desert the royal ascent on Calvary; for was it not on that very Cross erected on Mount Sion that He, the King, was to exercise His royal prerogative in drawing all things to Himself?

When the last hour of the world's closing cycle shall have run its halting course—the hour in all the hours of time pregnant with the world's destiny—then shall the

glory of Christ's inevitable kingship appear, and His everlasting kingdom be universally proclaimed. The "Rex tremendae majestatis," King of awful majesty, shall come in the clouds; and, as the Scriptures have foretold, at His coming the mountains shall run like melted wax, and the firmament shall crumble like a parchment scroll cast into the fire (Ps. 96:5).

Then shall blasphemous mockery turn to awful dread, insulting derision to staggering wonder, and withering scorn to remorse that gnaws without avail. The myriad hosts of the angelic powers led by the valiant Michael shall be marshaled in the clouds of heaven to conduct the Christ-King to the great white throne where every thought is revealed, every word sifted, every deed weighed in the trial balance of the Eternal. Then shall Caiaphas remember the prophetic words uttered by Christ Himself to Israel's fallen priesthood in the presence of the Sanhedrin, when He addressed them, appealing to another, to a higher court in the hereafter of time, in which the rôle of judge and the rôle of criminal would be other than they were that day: *Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven* (Matt. 26:64).

No derision of man shall mar the peerless splendor of that last awful scene, no mockery of his shall deride the august majesty of the enthroned King. The regal scepter shall replace the sceptered reed; the aureola of glory the crown of thorns; and, instead of the cast-off rag of scarlet, Christ shall appear in the apocalyptic robe which the Seer of Patmos says shall have on its borders, in letters of fire, "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Apoc. 19:16); and the King shall say to them that shall be on

His right hand: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matt. 25:34). *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of justice is the scepter of Thy kingdom* (Heb. 1:8).

Behold your Christ! Behold your King! Behold Him rising above all who went before, or who came after, immeasurably higher than Himalayas' farthest reaching peak towers above the hillsides nestling around its base. *Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today; and the same forever* (Heb. 13:8).

"But I am appointed King by Him
Over Sion His holy mountain,
Preaching His commandments.
The Lord hath said to me:
'Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten Thee.
Ask of Me, and I will give Thee
The Gentiles for Thy inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth
For Thy possession (Ps. 2:6-8).'"

CHAPTER II

Seeding The World

Christ teaching from the book of nature. The circumstances under which the lesson was given. When and where the parable was spoken. Christ is the divine Sower. The natural hindrances to the success of the seed's development. Striking examples in the Old Testament and in the New. The seed that fell upon good ground. Testimony of St. Augustine. Hindrances to the seed's productiveness. The unproductiveness of the Divine Word not to be attributed to the divine Sower. The lack of co-operation on the part of man's will. God's providential way for the development of the messianic kingdom through the seed of the Word of God.

IT is an old saying that example is the school of mankind, and that it rarely learns at any other. Indeed, there are many ways of imparting knowledge: we may teach the spoken word by appealing to the well-known illustrations round about us, and especially by drawing attention to the modern inventions of science that are now within the reach of all. Such was the method of teaching adopted by our divine Lord. He drew lessons of life and conduct from the familiar scenes of everyday life. He traveled from village to village with observant eye, noting the everyday occurrences as He passed along, gleaning from the great book of nature observations for His future use. He saw the laborers standing idle in the market place, the toilers lopping off the dead branches in the vineyard; and in this parabolic illustration He saw the sower going out to sow his seed. It is true that these are apparently commonplace events, the ordinary happenings noted in the book of nature; yet we need not wonder why He chose to read from such a book, for is it

not His very own, and has He not left it always open before our eyes, so that he who runs, as well as he who walks leisurely along, can read alike?

This allegorical illustration of the sower was spoken by our Lord in the second year of His ministry, and, very likely, by the shore of the Lake of Genezareth, where many of the most fertile fields were in a state of high cultivation. The object of the illustration in the mind of Christ is evidently to bring before the people the workings of divine grace in the soul of man in His messianic kingdom. There is but one sower and only one kind of seed; the success of the sowing depends entirely on the nature of the soil into which the seed has fallen, and this accounts for the marked difference that results in the time of the harvest. Hindrances are met with, not, however, from external causes only, but also from the intrinsic nature of the soil, because there has been no adequate preparation for the reception of the seed, to insure the desired results.

For the true meaning of this parable we have the authentic interpretation which Jesus Himself gave to it when alone with His disciples. His explanation is in the nature of an allegory. What becomes of the seed in the ground typifies what becomes of the word when sown in the hearts of men. And He saith to them: *Are you ignorant of this parable? And how shall you know all parables? He that soweth, soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown, and as soon as they have heard, immediately Satan cometh and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these likewise are they that are sown on the stony ground: who, when they heard the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves*

but are only for a time; and when tribulation and persecution ariseth for the word, they are presently scandalized. And others there are who are sown among thorns. These are they who hear the word; and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things entering choke the word, and it is made fruitless. And these are they who are sown upon the good ground, who hear the word and receive it, and yield fruit, the one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundredfold (Mark 4:13-20).

Some fell by the wayside (Matt. 13:4)—part of the good seed, which is the word of God, of revelation and faith. This *wayside* was not the main highway, but the beaten path that divided one field from another, as fences were unknown in Palestine. As the sower went out to sow his seed, the part that fell on the beaten path was either trodden down by men and beasts, or was picked up by the birds who watched the sower scattering his seed. This is the first hindrance of grace, a natural condition of unfitness for the seed to become productive; for no matter what the potentialities of the seed may be with regard to its life-giving powers, it is made dependent upon the condition of the soil that receives it. There is great vitality in the seed, but its life-giving germ is very delicate, requiring tender care in order that its action may become effective when mingled with the soil. Hence the nature of the soil is of first importance, since it has the power of developing or thwarting the functions which the life within the seed exercises, according to the condition of the soil and its state of preparedness.

The seed must find its nourishment in the soil. So it is with the gift of grace. The act of sowing signifies preaching the word of God and the administration of

the means of grace. When men's hearts are as hard as the beaten path by the wayside, the seed has no chance to manifest its latent powers. Grace is not a charm that works in spite of ourselves. It is a divine seed that fertilizes in the spiritual life of the soul, according to the capacity of the recipient. Whenever the seed of the divine word is rendered ineffective on account of the improper dispositions or indifference and coldness of heart, Jesus says: *Satan cometh and taketh away the word.* The enemy of man has then an easy task with such dispositions. Like the birds in the parable, who fly about the nearest bushes to watch the sower and pick up the seed, Satan comes picking up the seed of God's word in order to efface any impression, however slight, which it may have made.

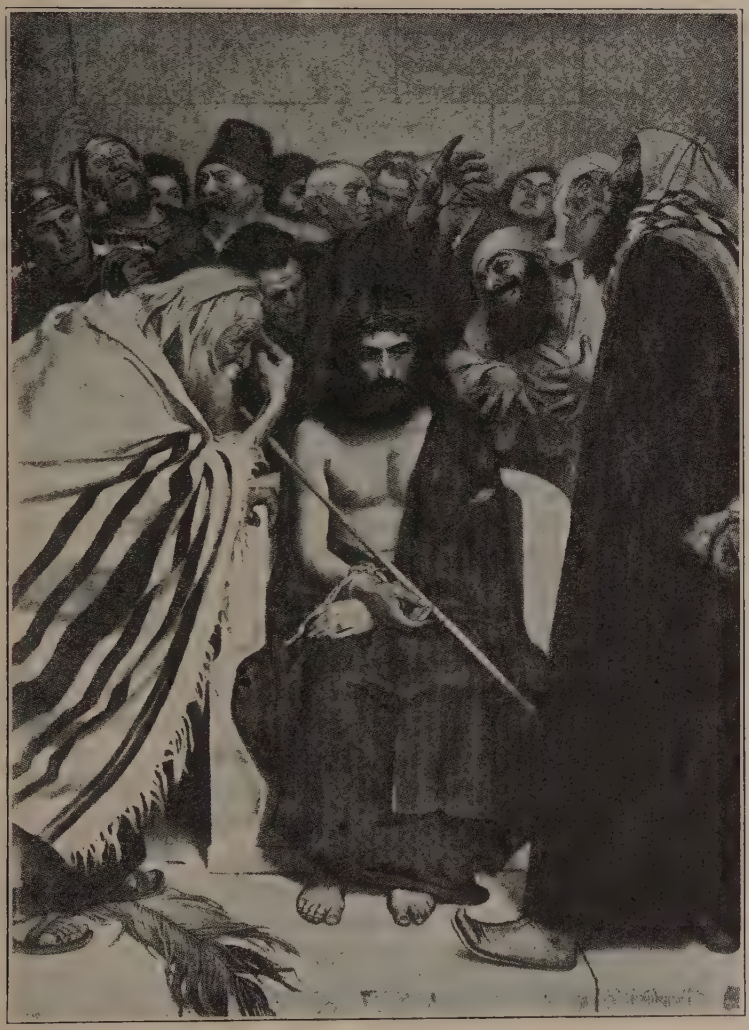
Note well that Satan would have no power to steal away the word were it not for the improper dispositions of the class of hearers who are figured by the wayside. Wherefore Christ said: *He that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath* (Matt. 13:12). The explanation is: He who has religious knowledge and takes that care to improve it which men who are rich are observed to take in order to increase their wealth, will find it increase; while those who have but little religious knowledge, and manage it imprudently, as the poor are often observed to do with their means of livelihood, will find it come to naught.

God permits spiritual blindness and hardness of heart on account of man's abuse of his free will in not disposing himself for the action of divine grace. Thus it was with the Jews, who rendered themselves positively unworthy of understanding the hidden spiritual meaning

contained in the parables of the messianic kingdom. Time and again they had been eyewitnesses of Christ's stupendous miracles, but they obstinately clung to a false and worldly notion of the messianic character. For that very reason the words of the prophecy in Isaias were literally fulfilled in the Jewish people: *Hearing, hear, and understand not: and see the vision, and know it not. Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.* (Isa. 6:9-10). The same condition of callous indifference can be met with everywhere in our own day, and it becomes the principal obstacle to the efficient influence of divine grace.

The divine seed has little chance to penetrate below the surface of such a soil; hence it may never take root. Like the wayside path on which everyone is free to walk, the surface becomes so hardened that no one leaves any impress of his tracks behind. On such a soil the seed has no power of contact with available plant food, for there can be no reciprocity between the assimilating powers of the one and the germinating functions of the other. There is mere contact only, but that is not enough for assimilation between the properties of the soil and the functions of the seed. Thus it is with grace that comes with the word of God. A man must hear the word and receive it into his heart; hence his heart must be susceptible to its reception, and it must likewise be free from the spirit of worldliness and vain desires which choke the good seed.

Some fell upon stony ground (Matt. 13:5). The much-beaten path is figurative of a callous heart, and the rocky ground, with its thin layer of soil underneath, por-



THE MOCKING OF CHRIST

trays the light, inconstant dispositions of those who are easily led either one way or the other. Such persons are readily impressed by their feelings and are easily given to passing emotions. St. Matthew says such a man as this heareth the word and immediately receiveth it with joy, but only for a time; and when there arise tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized (Matt. 13:21). It was of such men the Prophet Ezechiel spoke: *The children of Thy people, that talk of Thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another each man to his neighbor, saying: Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come to Thee, as if a people were coming in; and my people sit before Thee, and hear Thy words, and do them not, for they turn them into a song of their mouth; and their heart goeth after their covetousness; and Thou art to them as a musical song which is sung with a sweet and agreeable voice; and they hear Thy words, and do them not* (Ezech. 33:30-32).

These people receive the seed of God's word, but they lack the courage and stability of endurance to persevere in the grace they have received, in spite of external hindrances. Impulsive and imaginative persons are easily influenced by external things that wean their hearts away from following divine inspirations. They are typified by the ground that has only a thin or shallow layer of surface soil; beneath is the hard, unyielding rock which the seed cannot penetrate to take root, and so they lack the roots for endurance.

The chief reason why many Christians fail to make the divine word productive in their souls is due to the fact that they are not prepared to meet with opposition to the teachings of the Gospel; and since they cannot

stand opposition, much less are they willing to face persecution, which, after all, is the crucial test that the roots of faith have sunk deep into their soul-life. This was true in the early days of Christianity and it is true today. The author of the *Imitation of Christ* says: "Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His Passion" (Bk. II, c. ii). In the decisive moment the fickle and unstable left; only the patient and persevering remained. Like conditions are today encountered in the case of converts to the Catholic faith, who content themselves with the elementary instructions given in preparation for baptism, but who never inquire any further for a deeper study of the religion taught by the Church they have so freely entered. Such persons should give more time to prayer and spiritual reading so that opposition in the day of trial will rather strengthen their souls to hold fast to that which they have received.

And others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them (Matt. 13:7). In this feature of the parable we are dealing once more with the condition of the unprepared soil under a different aspect. Travelers in Palestine are familiar with the abundant growth of the thorns and thistles that flourish there. In the mind of Christ these were a striking illustration of the obstacles to the influence of grace in the heart of man. He identifies such obstacles with the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust after other things. St. Luke mentions three—the solicitudes, riches, and pleasures of life. St. Matthew reduces them to two—solicitudes and riches; for riches taken as an obstacle to salvation include pleasures, being the means by which they are procured. St. John calls them the threefold

concupiscence. *For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* (I John 2:16).

Thistles and thorns have their seeds and roots hidden in the good soil of the field under cultivation, and, together with the corn, grow up out of the same ground. It is peculiar to corn not to be hindered by weeds until it is considerably grown up; and so the persons here exemplified approach by some degrees to the happy state of those signified by the good ground, which brings forth a hundredfold. They receive the word, it enters into their hearts, it takes root, and grows up to a considerable height; and yet for lack of pains to pluck out the thorns, is becomes choked by degrees and brings forth no fruit. *The thorns . . . . choked them.* The same type of hindrances is found in the heart of man. Inordinate leanings and worldly desires, if left unchecked, lead to the threefold concupiscence mentioned by St. John. The heart is vexed with anxious solicitude for the possession of earthly things, while the soul is lured on to the deceitful pleasures of self-indulgence. It is extremely hard for one whose life is spent in a constant round of pleasure, and who has set his heart on the things this world can give, to live for the higher world above. And yet, St. Paul says: *Seek the things that are above* (Col. 3:1). If, therefore, we are convinced by practical experience that too much contact with the spirit of the world lowers our spiritual tone, and that its tendency is to make us lax and remiss in the practice of our holy faith, we are bound, since we must save our souls, to break loose from the baneful contact.

The Old Testament furnishes striking examples of the pernicious results that follow from such inordinate ten-

dencies. Balaam had long desired to go to the court of Balak. God, who knew him better than he knew himself, forbade him; but he would go. He went; and, going, the good seed was choked and he fell into awful sin. Lot desired the luxuries and riches of Sodom and felt, with his strong religious instincts, that he could withstand them. He, too, went, and though his righteous soul was troubled, we have but to review the narrative of that dreadful night to learn how sadly he had become tainted by the evil influence around him, till at last, to save himself, he had to fly (Gen. 19:14-20). This is the sad state of many so-called prominent Catholics, whose only claim to prominence is the position which riches, solicitudes, and pleasures so naturally bring about to the neglect of the one important affair mentioned by Christ: *Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matt. 6:33). The solicitudes of the world fill the heart, and its pleasures corrupt it; and both the one and the other infuse a worldly spirit, totally inconsistent with the spirit of God.

It is indeed a terrifying thought that in each one of us there is the possibility of spoiling God's work by rendering the action of grace ineffectual in our soul-life; this is very aptly set forth by our divine Lord in the parable. Just as it is true that we find the soil laid waste for lack of proper cultivation, so likewise can it happen that the heart of man is not in a fit condition for co-operation with the wonderful effects of divine grace. In the book of Ecclesiasticus we are made aware of the fact that material goods and temporal prosperity often prove more hurtful than helpful to man's salvation. Few are made better by riches, the majority are ruined and lost through them. The heart becomes so engrossed in the

possession of the perishable things of time that it finds it difficult to seek and relish those which are unseen and eternal. The Holy Spirit Himself testifies to the truth of this when He praises the rich man who is found without blemish. *Who is he,* He asks, *and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life* (Eccles. 31:9). As wonderful things are rare, so too are rich men who are without blemish.

However, there should be no discouragement in the spiritual life, even for those who have brought themselves into such an unpromising situation. In a sermon attributed to St. Augustine, we have the consoling thought that a change of heart through God's grace is always possible, this very idea being taken from the parable of the sower. The hard soil may again become soft, the shallow soil may become rich and deep, and the soil beset with thorns open and clear. There is, indeed, this difference between the heavenly and the earthly seed, that the latter must use the soil as it finds it, for it does not possess the power of changing the condition of that into which it comes; but the heavenly seed, if acted upon by the soil in which it lies, also acts more efficaciously upon it by softening it where it was hard; for we read in the Book of Jeremias: *Are not My words as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* (Jer. 23:29). The divine word deepens where it was shallow, it cuts the roots of evil where it was encumbered; and wherever it has free access, transforms and ennobles each of these inferior soils, making each become what man's heart was in the beginning, before the fall—good ground, prepared to supply nourishment to that divine word, the seed of life everlasting. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by*

the word of God who liveth and remaineth forever (I St. Peter 1:23).

And others fell upon good ground. God's designs shall not be frustrated in the sowing of the seed. The three conditions of the ground hitherto given illustrate the unproductiveness of the seed on account of the unprepared state of the three kinds of soil. Now, our Lord brings forward three classes of men who receive the seed by hearing the word and yield fruit, the one thirty, another sixty, and yet another a hundredfold. In each instance the soil was good; and where the soil is good the seed is sure to germinate. The seed has the germ of life; the soil the element of nourishment. The one needs the vital principle of the other, for both are complementary to each other.

That on the good ground, said Christ, *are they who . . . . hearing the word keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience* [*with perseverance* in the Greek text] (Luke 8: 15). They receive Christ's teaching in a docile spirit, frequently reflecting upon it to understand it better; their faithful co-operation merits an increase of spiritual favors from above, and thus according to the measure of grace imparted to them, they produce fruitful harvests of thirty, sixty, or one hundredfold increase. Let us bear well in mind that the rich harvest has its fulfillment in patient and persevering souls, for such is the true characteristic of those who are working in earnest for the kingdom of heaven. God's work is ever done through patient and persevering endurance, with a ready will to face the daily round of duties that make up our earthly toil until the heavenly harvest is come.

St. John Chrysostom aptly inquires: "Whence does He, the Omnipresent, who fills all things, go forth? How

does He go forth? Not to any place; but to us in His intercourse and His relations with us; because by assuming our flesh He came nearer to us. He went forth to us, because, as sin had closed the entrance to us, we could not enter in. Why did He go forth? To destroy this earth overgrown with thistles, or to chastise the husbandmen? By no means; He went forth to scatter the word of the fear of the Lord, to cultivate it and to care for it. Here He names the instruction the seed, men's souls the field, whilst He Himself is the sower." Then:

"Sow with a generous hand;
Pause not for toil or pain;
Weary not through the heat of summer,
Weary not through the cold spring rain;
But wait till the autumn comes
For the sheaves of golden grain."

CHAPTER III

While the Sower Slept

Scope of the parable. Two sowers. The enemy in the dark. Spread of the faith universal. Cockle, a figure of the wicked. Testimony of St. Paul and St. Chrysostom. Biding the time. Existence of evil—rise and spread of heresy. Why God permits it. Christ's prophetic forecast—His warning to St. Peter. The harvest and the reapers. Purpose of the good seed. Fate of the cockle. Passage from the Book of Wisdom. Prerogative of human liberty. The conflict between grace and sin. The reward of the elect.

IN the preceding parable of the sower our divine Lord has made us aware of three distinct causes of failure pertaining to hindrances to the work of grace in the spiritual life of the soul. There He dealt in detail with those natural obstacles typified by the three kinds of soil which were unprepared and consequently unfit for the germinating action of the seed. The causes that led to the triple failure were mostly external and consequent upon the undesirable condition of the soil itself. In the moral allegory of the present narrative a new feature of obstructive hindrance is laid bare. We are introduced to a preternatural agent at work which was altogether unlooked for and unsuspected.

Like the parable of the sower this, too, has the advantage of being explained by our Lord Himself; and while it was marked by a spirit of great toleration, yet it ended with very grave threats. It was first addressed to the multitude, but owing to the unusual interest it had aroused in the minds of the apostles and their desire to know its inner meaning, Christ afterwards expounded it to them in private.

When, therefore, He had dismissed the multitude, and re-entered the house, very probably the house of Simon, His disciples came to Him, saying: *Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field* (Matt. 13:36). Because it had reference to man's destiny, as well as to the net results of his fidelity to supernatural principles, they wished to ascertain the true meaning of what they had just heard. Fortunately for us, the apostles made that request! With the touching solicitude of a father Christ explained in detail the lesson He meant to convey.

Among the synoptics, St. Matthew is the only one to record our Lord's exposition of this parable, which is passed over both by St. Mark and St. Luke. Under the veil of an allegory Christ begins at once: *He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. . . . . Even as cockle, therefore, is gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear* (Matt. 13:37-43).

The Sower is the Son of man. This is the title which Jesus had given to Himself, some short time before, when a certain scribe wished to become His disciple (Matt. 19: 28); a title which He will keep even to the judgment seat of Pilate; for it is as man that He will teach all truth, the truth that will enlighten the world with the light of life.

The good seed is the wheat, for the grains are all alike; so also is the belief of everyone in Christ's kingdom, the true Church, because there can be no question here of human opinion. That is earthly seed. The good seed was sown everywhere throughout the known world. There was but one faith, one religion. A quarter of a century had not elapsed from the Ascension of Christ into heaven, when St. Paul could address the Romans: *Your faith is spoken of in the whole world* (Rom. 1:8). This historical fact is worthy of note; it shows that the true religion was preached in the whole known world even before all the books of the New Testament were written and the Bible had been placed between its covers; for if it were not known to the Christians of the world, it surely could not have been spoken of by them.

Christ continues: *And the cockle are the children of the wicked one, and the enemy that sowed them is the devil* (Matt. 13:38-39). Here our Lord shows us that there is a preternatural, as well as a natural, cause of the evil that is generated in man. There are those, of course, who attribute all their failures in the spiritual life to the direct action of the devil; but in this they are much mistaken; for all the devil has to do with certain souls is simply to leave them to their own natural dispositions and the lack of co-operation with actual grace, when the evil tendency to sin works itself out in various harmful ways. Nevertheless, St. Paul tells us that Satan can assume the character of an angel of light to practice his wiles on unsuspecting individuals (II Cor. 11:14). He can, so to speak, mimic and counterfeit the works of Christ. In the words of St. John Chrysostom: "After the prophets, the false prophets; after the apostles, the false apostles; after Christ, the Antichrist."

His enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way (Matt. 13:25). Wherefore we have to deal with two sowers sowing different seeds in the same soil: the sower that goes out to sow his seed, and the sower that is his enemy, following in his tracks, sowing cockle among the wheat. It may be almost inconceivable for us, unfamiliar as we are with racial traits, both good and bad, in the people of other lands, and particularly in the East, to understand how anyone could be so cravenly debased as to scatter bad seed in his neighbor's furrow, even in the furrow of an enemy. Surely, there is no such villainy practiced in our latitudes; however, we are informed that the probability of this kind of injury was legislated against in Roman Law; and travelers in the Orient tell us that such misconduct was common in parts of the Indies, Malabar and Bengal, as well as in the agricultural districts of Palestine, where the wretched trick was done by an enemy who watched at night for a favorable opportunity, while the owner of the field was asleep, to perpetrate the evil deed.*

While men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat. Satan sows in the night like a traitor who works in the dark; Jesus sows in the clear light of day. In the early stages of its growth cockle

* Roberts, in his *Oriental Illustrations,* p. 541, gives the following interesting account of the practice that obtained in India. "See," he remarks, "that lurking villain watching for the time when his neighbor shall plough his fields: he carefully marks the period when the work has been finished, and goes in the night following, and casts in what the natives call pandinella; this being of rapid growth springs up before the good seed. But there is another noisome plant which they cast into the ground of those they hate, called perum-pirandi, which is more destructive to vegetation than any other plant. Has a man purchased a field out of the hands of another, the offended person says, 'I will plant the perum-pirandi in his ground'."

has a close resemblance to wheat, and it is difficult to distinguish the difference between them until the ears begin to fill; then it is easy to detect one from the other by the erect position of the cockle among the wheat blades. Commentators also note the taste of the cockle is bitter, and it has the effect of a narcotic which produces dizziness even among the barn fowl.

As soon as the difference between the wheat and the cockle became perceptible in the growth of the ears in the blade, the servants asked the owner of the field if they could not go and gather up the cockle. The answer was given in the negative: "No." The experienced farmer knows, only too well, that the roots of both plants are so entangled in the ground that any attempt to dislodge the one must result in uprooting the other; the rooting out would do more harm than good. Wherefore, for the sake of the wheat and also for that of the cockle, the latter, at least for the present, must be suffered to grow together with the wheat. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest* (Matt. 13:30).

Men are always in haste to put into execution their plans of redress, because their control over time is limited, whereas God can wait because He is eternal. "Time," according to St. Chrysostom, "is the great transforming agent for renewal as well as for ruin—forerunner of the Resurrection as well as of death. Time in the hand which governs it, the hand of God alone, is an assured instrument of decisive victory."

Just as the farmer must bide his time by waiting patiently for the harvest to ripen before he can glean the sheaves of good wheat after discarding the bundles of cockle; so does God in this world of ours patiently bide His time until the harvest of mankind is ripened, show-

ing in His providential way the admirable attributes of His goodness, and wisdom, and eternity. Our divine Lord in this illustration instructs His disciples both as to the origin and existence of evil in the messianic kingdom. He even permits that heresies should arise from time to time, because such evils, in spite of themselves, contribute towards the development of His kingdom by purifying and testing His elect. For this reason St. Augustine so well wrote: "God would not allow of any evil, if He were not able out of evil to bring forth good." And St. Thomas Aquinas says: "God tolerates the existence of the wicked amongst the good, in the first place, because the wicked furnish the good with opportunities of exercising virtue in every form." Moreover, the wicked may in time become converted, and the sinner of today may be the penitent of tomorrow. In the order of nature evolution is a delusion—no one has ever seen cockle become wheat; but in the supernatural order we frequently see souls on the road to ruin return to God.

The good seed and the blades springing up from it were not destroyed by the cockle, but throve amidst the difficulties of their environment, and continued to bring forth until the time the cockle also had made its appearance. Even so in the Church of God it may often happen that moral unworthiness can continue for a time unperceived until at length events disclose it in the marked difference of attitude between the true children of light and those of darkness. In the very first century of the Christian era St. Paul, in his letter to the Church of Corinth, sounds a warning note against the evildoers who started to teach heresies among the faithful, when he wrote to them, saying: *I hear that when you come together in the church, there are schisms among you, and*

in part I believe it. For there must be also heresies, that they also who are approved, may be made manifest among you. . . . . What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not (I Cor. 11:18-22).

Thus has it ever been in the true Church of Christ here on earth. She continues the fruitful mission of her divine Founder for the salvation of immortal souls, no matter how many false religions and wrangling sects may spring up about her, each, like the cockle in the parable, pretending to be the true wheat—the true church of Jesus Christ. Had not the Church produced numberless saints of every age and condition of life long before either the heresiarchs or heresies were ever thought of? Such has been her glorious record in the ages of the past, and there is no reason to fear that it shall not be duplicated in the future, even though other sects with their apostates may arise, because they too will share a like fate with their prototypes, starting up and vanishing like clouds that chase one another only to disappear at the horizon.

Now we see why our Lord permits heresies and evils of various kinds to exist. He looked forward with prophetic eye to the future history of the Church and to each individual member of His elect; neither did He have to look very far afield, for He already knew that amongst those of His own sowing there was one who would turn out to be the cockle of the wicked one, a true child of the devil—*Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?* (John 6:71). In the plan of that wicked one St. Ignatius Loyola clearly points out the tactics of the enemy in his striking meditation on "The Two Standards." "Consider how Satan summons together innumerable devils, how he disperses them to different cities, through-

out the whole world, not omitting a single province, locality, class, or person." It is the plan, therefore, of the enemy of man to follow up the work of Christ wherever His divine operations are extended; and, as much as possible, to thwart their results. For the "enemy" passes over the field in which the footsteps of the sower of the good seed have gone before him.

We need not wonder if we find Satan's influence directly at work in those places where the atmosphere is congenial for the success of his efforts in thwarting the work of Christ. Such an atmosphere is what spiritual writers call the "world," not indeed the planet on which we live, but that part of it for which so many do live, the world of men, which is alienated by sin from God. But the influence of the enemy is not only there; it penetrates at times into the holiest precincts; it is to be found lurking at the gate of the sanctuary itself. What a strange fact that almost all the sects and schisms, old and new, in the history of the Church have been in one way or another connected with the clerical state, and had in many cases their beginning among ecclesiastics of the highest rank! Still, it should not cause undue wonder, for when armies are engaged in battle, the enemy tries first to locate the officers, knowing full well that when they are disposed of, the rank and file of the fighting troops soon become disorganized. Such were the tactics the combatants made use of in the recent World War; they tried first to kill off the enemy's commanders. Thus, the greatest delight the enemy of our spiritual life can entertain is to enter the sacred precincts of the sanctuary, and there to sow the seeds of evil even among the elect.

Our Blessed Lord has marvelously provided for the safety of the Church, for He well knew how the "enemy"

would leave nothing undone to wreck and ruin His divine work. But while the Church has all the assurance of safety, the individual is not so safe. Wherefore did Christ say to His chief Apostle: *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren* (Luke 22:31-32).

If Satan has been permitted in the past to tempt the very Son of God Himself, we can see how much more readily he will try to exert his evil influence over those portions of the "Field" where the observance of the evangelical counsels is supposed to flourish, and where the religious orders under the fostering care of the Church and sanctioned by her authority are pledged to the solemn engagements of their religious profession. We must not forget that Satan works in the dark. *While men were asleep, his enemy came* (Matt. 13:35). Hence we can never neglect the ceaseless vigil; it is the price of security from attack, for there is no calling, no profession, no pursuit, however sacred, into which the evil seed has not been sometime cast for the malicious purpose of occupying the ground that has been seeded with the good seed.

But the harvest is the end of the world, says Jesus, *and the reapers are the angels* (Matt. 13:39). Our Lord lays great stress on this closing part of the parable—the harvest. Not content with saying, "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels," He emphasizes the last act in the general scene by a vivid picture of the General Judgment. *Even as cockle therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send His angels,*

and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 13:40-43).

In the end the wicked shall share the same fate as the cockle; they shall be cast *into the furnace of fire* (vs. 42). *Furnace of fire* means the place of eternal torments, as the *furnace of burning fire* in the Book of Daniel (3:6). The *weeping and gnashing of teeth* here, as in many more passages of Holy Writ, signify the torments themselves, as well as the effect they have on the lost.

God spares the cockle for the sake of the wheat, i. e., godly men; for without a miracle, they also would necessarily suffer in the universal chastisement (Matt. 13: 29). Since God can and does bring good out of evil, He has made the wicked serve His purpose by giving the occasion to countless martyrs to seal their faith with the testimony of their lifeblood. He has made the pernicious errors of heresy serve as an occasion to raise up brilliant doctors as zealous defenders of the true faith, and He has made the countless confessors and virgin saints of every age and condition prove conclusively that the wheat, God's elect, can thrive fruitfully even in the very midst of the tares of the cockle. Thus does God spare the cockle for the sake of the wheat. His forbearance manifests His divine wisdom; and in this great attribute, He shows us the marvelous realization of His world-plan, which is neither altered nor hindered by the malignant growth of the cockle—the perversity of man.

Just men are tried in the crucible of tribulation; persecution only serves to make them more prayerful; and

TEMPTATION OF JESUS

we know from Holy Writ that *the continual prayer of a just man availeth much* (James 5:16). Hence it is that the Church attributes two of her shining lights, viz., St. Paul and St. Augustine, to the prayers of St. Stephen and St. Monica. What a blessed privilege we possess in prayer, by which we can rise above the things of earth to commune with God and draw from His Sacred Heart those treasures of grace to bring about the conversion of sinners and to fortify ourselves against adversity! This spiritual strength comes through the power of persevering prayer.

We are told by experts in medical science that most of the contagious diseases that infect the atmosphere can be traced to almost imperceptible, microscopic germs; and while they are continually breathed into the system by numberless people, they bring disease and death only to those whose vitality is lowered through the run-down condition of their physical life. Others will breathe the same air unmolested by contagion, while there are some who succumb to its pestilential virus. Like conditions are evident in the spiritual life of the soul. The conflict is ever on between grace and sin, for the seeds of both were sown in the initial stage of human life, and if we are at all observant, it is easy to see how our spiritual condition often consists of a monotonous regularity of swinging back and forth from virtue to vice and vice to virtue. We say to ourselves that the temptation was strong. Yes, but not so strong as to be above our strength; for God permits no temptation to befall us above that which we are able to bear (I Cor. 4:13). The fact is we were spiritually undone long before the temptation came; and had we but reinforced our failing strength with the sufficient actual grace still left to us,

we could with that power and with the help of earnest prayer have thrust the temptation aside with the strength of a Samson. Spiritual writers assure us that there is no influence external to ourselves, no temptation to evil, no environment, however sin-laden and reeking with the dread infection of sin, that can undo the work of grace when accompanied by earnest and persevering prayer.

Our divine Lord sums up the moral lesson of the parable by vividly portraying the happy destiny of the elect. *Then,* when the final separation of the elect from the lost has taken place, *shall the just,* the faithful children of God, members of the kingdom of Christ on earth, *shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (Matt. 13:43). They shall enter the kingdom prepared for them, radiant in the effulgence of the Beatific Vision, bearing with them their chosen sheaves of fine wheat, fruits of the earthly kingdom, which have merited for them that reward spoken of by Daniel the Prophet: *The learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity* (Dan. 12:3).

In the fifth chapter of the Book of Wisdom we find one of the scenes of the final judgment portrayed by the Lord Himself. *Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors. These seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation. Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honor. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among*

the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. . . . . Such things as these the sinners said in hell (Wisd. 5:1-14).

The striking events portrayed in this chapter enable us to understand why God permits such a mingling of good and evil during the present life—the time of trial. Since God created man free, his freedom shall remain unto the end of life; for God prefers to permit evil, the abuse of freedom, rather than abrogate this great prerogative of human liberty. Furthermore, in this providential way we have a better opportunity of seeing one of God's divine attributes, His admirable patience. He is patient because He is eternal; and that greater good may come forth from evil, in His divine providence He shows us this forbearance. How many would be irretrievably lost if the hand of God had suddenly smitten them in their sins! And even if some are not converted, is it not rather to show that their perversity is the result of their own choice, which God permits because He will not abrogate the freedom of the human will? The fact that evil exists in the world is also a help for virtue among the elect, who are to look forward to the day of reward, and not to the time of trial, for the recompense of their virtuous deeds.

"Bide thou thy time!
Watch with meek eyes the race of pride and crime;
Sit in the gate, and be the heathen's jest,
Smiling and self-possest.
O thou, to whom is pledged a victor's sway,
Bide thou the victor's day!

"Such loss is gain:
Wait the bright Advent that shall loose thy chain!
E'en now the shadows break, and gleams divine
Edge the dim distant line.
When thrones are trembling, and earth's fat ones quail,
True Seed, thou shalt prevail!"

CHAPTER IV

Small Beginnings

An apparent paradox. Insignificance of the mustard seed. Points of comparison. Citation from St. Augustine. Scriptural note from St. Paul. Why Christ mentions the herbs. Protestant testimony to Catholicism. The divine character of the true Church. Pharisaic party in Jerusalem. The eve of the Great Pentecost. Tertullian's testimony. The kingdoms of the world. Cardinal Manning's historic note.

AMONG apparently commonplace sources from which to draw an objective comparison of the messianic kingdom, we can hardly conceive one less likely to symbolize so great a project as that which Christ has selected in this allegory. He says: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least, indeed, of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof* (Matt. 13:31-32).

In the whole range of our Lord's teachings with nature's object lessons in the background, it may happen that we do not get the drift of His hidden meaning until we strike the lead that takes us to the mine of spiritual wealth that lies beneath the surface. It would seem as if Christ intended to arouse our curiosity, or rather our interest, in selecting what appears to border on the paradoxical for the material that would best serve His purpose. Such is likely His intention in the present simile. We must not forget, however, that the lessons pertinent to our knowledge of the messianic kingdom are given in a connected series of parables and allegories which show

not only the marvelous development of the Church, but also of the individual soul. Wherefore the divine Teacher leads us from one branch of knowledge to another, never using the same illustration a second time, preferring to give a pleasing variety to His teaching, like rich mosaics that harmonize to make up a perfect whole.

St. John Chrysostom, in his admirable commentary, states why our Lord makes choice of the mustard seed. "As Christ said in the parable of the sower that three parts of the seed were lost, and only one was preserved, and that even this fourth part suffered so much injury [parable of the cockle] because the tares would beset that portion which had taken root downward and sprung upward; wherefore, lest they, the apostles, should be tempted to lose heart and perhaps ask: Who then are to be enumerated amongst the faithful? the Master will allay their fears, and remove every misgiving, by strengthening their faith through this parable of the mustard seed, thus assuring them of the prodigious development of the Church from the preaching of the Gospel. As if our Lord would say: 'My kingdom shall survive all these losses, and overcome all such hindrances; for even though, like the tiny seed, it appears insignificant in the beginning; yet it shall develop like a mighty tree and fill the earth with its branches.' "

It is not difficult, however, to note the points of difference. The seed of mustard is certainly small; yet there are seeds that are still smaller. The comparison comes from the great bulk which the tree attains in proportion to the seed itself. This seed has an extraordinary vegetative force, and this is the point to which our Lord directs our special attention; not so much to the magnitude of the tree itself, as to the tiny seed from which it

unfolds its great energy and undying life. The life of the mustard tree comes from weak and insignificant beginnings, and the life of the Church coming from apparent weakness and rather unpretentious sources will manifest wonderful growth together with an all-enduring life, so that the splendid results that have come from such unpromising beginnings will astonish the world.

The comparison had also its special fitness in other ways because of the far-reaching development which His simile on this occasion was specially intended to convey. Though the mustard seed was indeed comparatively unimportant, yet it had in the ancient world a distinctive value all its own. It took rank among the nobler Pythagorean symbols, was reckoned as a powerful antidote for medicinal purposes against the poisonous bite of snakes, and was considered a universal remedy in curing various diseases. In a sermon ascribed to St. Augustine, mention is also made of other very apt reasons why the mustard seed was selected as a symbol of special fitness for its likeness to the kingdom of heaven. Its heat, its fiery vigor, the fact that only through being bruised it gives out its best virtues, and all this under so trivial an appearance, and in so small a compass, may well have moved Him to select this seed by which to set forth the destinies of the "Word" of the kingdom, that doctrine of a crucified Redeemer which was to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block; but which should prove to them that believed, the power of God unto salvation.

While the mustard seed has all these admirable qualities, which in all likelihood were present to the divine mind of Christ; yet the principal object on which He wished to focus the apostles' attention was the magni-

tude of the work resulting from the weakness of its beginning. In matter of fact this was indeed true of the mustard seed, for it developed into a large tree in comparison with all the herbs that grew in the same garden; so much so, that the birds of the air came to build their nests in its branches.* This image of the birds of the air is frequently made use of in Holy Scripture. *Over them the birds of the air shall dwell: from the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices* (Ps. 103:12). A similar thought is expressed in Ezechiel (17:23): *On the high mountains of Israel will I plant it* [the tender twig], *and it shall shoot forth into branches, and shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar: and all birds shall dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof.*

A grain of mustard seed, which a man sowed in his field. The man here referred to as the owner of the field is none other than our Lord Himself, else there could be no meaning to the relationship existing between the mustard seed in the allegory and the kingdom of heaven as established by Christ. That our Lord points expressly to the tiny size of the seed, telling us that it *is the least . . . . of all seeds,* is a sure token of that mystic parallel between the development of the mustard tree from its seed and the development of the Church from Christ Himself. The Church sprang from Christ; from Him it unfolded its prodigious growth and from Him it derived all those supernatural powers which were to function for the development of its productive life in His messianic kingdom.

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* Thomson, *The Land and the Book,* pp. 414-15, mentions the mustard tree in Palestine so large that a man on horseback could find shelter under its branches. And Hoker in his *Palestine* speaks of a mustard tree ten feet high.

Among the Jews the mustard seed was taken as the symbol of anything exceedingly small and unimportant. "Small as a grain of mustard seed" was a proverbial expression among the people of Palestine. And yet, its apparent smallness notwithstanding, it is honored more than all other seeds in being selected by Christ for a comparison with the origin, growth, and development of the Church, His kingdom here on earth. As the mustard seed, so with His kingdom!

There was surely a marked contrast between the splendor and magnificence of the messianic kingdom as conjured up in the minds of the Jews, and the lowly beginning of that same kingdom in the mind of Christ. For what could be less in the eyes of worldly wisdom than the divine Founder of the kingdom with His twelve illiterate associates? What, to human eyes, could be less magnificent, what could give less of promise than the origin of that kingdom in His own person? Was He not, at His birth in the midnight-cave, placed on the coarse straw of the manger? Was He not the reputed son of a village carpenter? Did He not, as a young man, have to support Himself by the sweat of His daily toil? And were not His disciples despised by the aristocracy of Jerusalem as an uncultured set of Galilean fishermen? Even during the heyday of His power, when His miracles were the burning topics on the lips of enemies and friends, His converts were few and far between, chiefly among the poor and illiterate; and, finally, when He was apparently within sight of certain victory, He was overpowered by the malice of His enemies, and with no resistance from Himself and no help from His friends, He died an ignominious death as a malefactor on the Cross.

But these are the evidential tokens of that fundamental law which governs all divine operations concerning human affairs. God's ways are not the ways of men! Wherefore this providential law of Divine Providence must necessarily be carried out in the origin, growth, and establishment of His Church. It must begin its existence in fashion small and contemptible in the eyes of men, precisely because it was God's work and not man's; and therefore must it grow and develop along lines diametrically opposite to human inventions and the institutions established and developed by the hand of man.

St. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians points with telling emphasis to this inexorable law of God's dealings with men. *For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise . . . . and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His sight* (I Cor. 1:26-29).

This tiny mustard seed *when it is grown up . . . . is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree.* Since the tree is the Church of Jesus Christ, we naturally inquire what are the herbs? Why did He state that the herbs are inferior to it? If the mustard tree is the Church of Christ, the herbs are her rivals, the various sects—with this difference however: that the tree was planted by "the man in his field," but the herbs were planted by others or came as a natural growth from the soil. Wherefore the tree is of divine origin, and the herbs are of the earth, earthly. There is no mistaking this point in the allegory. Note the decisive contrast between the tree and the

herbs, for the distinctive superiority of the tree is brought out in clear relief against the inferiority of the herbs which were not planted by the Man in His field.*

We can see the marks of the true Church of Christ admirably set forth in the similitude of this interesting allegory; they are not only unity, holiness, apostolicity, but also universality — catholicity. Our divine Lord states this clearly in the parable, where He shows that His Church, once planted, shall exceed in numbers to the extent of embracing all the nations of the earth; and her magnitude shall be so manifest as to surpass the combined strength of all the rivals that may surround her. Even the Protestant historians furnish eloquent testimony to the expansion of the Church that after nineteen centuries of time stands today unquestioned. No matter what heresies or schisms arose during that long period of her existence, no matter how many countless thousands were torn away from her fold, still the number of her faithful children far exceeded that of those "who revolted and remained no longer in the doctrine of Christ." And were we to sum up together all the denominations of Christians not Catholic, they do not amount to one-half those who still hold and profess the Catholic faith.

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* Karl Ludwig von Haller, writing of his conversion in a letter dated October 17, 1820, relates a conversation which he had with a Protestant clergyman on Christmas Day of the year 1819. The clergyman in a sermon on the text, "This day if you should hear His voice, harden not your hearts," spoke of the parable of the grain of mustard seed. "I remarked to him," says von Haller, "that our Protestant Church did not so much resemble a tree as leaves which were scattered by the wind. A tree must have roots, branches, and leaves which are dependent on one another, and it seemed to me that the Catholic Church alone had a head and members, and thus in truth was one fold under one shepherd."

"There is not," says the Protestant writer Macaulay, "and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the supreme pontiffs. That line we trace back in unbroken series from the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth century; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends.

"The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone; and the papacy remains. The papacy remains not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigor. The Catholic Church is sending forth to the farthest end of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the beginning of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. It is not strange that, in the year 1799, even sagacious observers should have thought that, at length, the hour of the Church of Rome was come. An infidel power ascendant, the Pope dying in captivity, the most illustrious prelates of France living in a foreign country on Protestant alms, the noblest edifices which the munificence of former ages had consecrated to the worship of God turned into temples of victory, or into banqueting houses for political societies.

"But the end was not yet. . . . Anarchy had had its day. A new order of things arose out of the confusion, new dynasties, new laws, new titles; and amidst them emerged the ancient religion. The Arabs have a fable that the Great Pyramid was built by antediluvian kings, and alone, of all the works of men, bore the weight of the flood. Such as this was the fate of the papacy. It had been buried under the great inundation; but its deep foundations had remained unshaken; and when the waters abated it appeared alone amidst the ruins of a world that had passed away. The republic of Holland was gone, and the old Helvetian league, and the House of Bourbon, and the parliaments and aristocracy of France. Europe was full of young creations, a French empire, a kingdom of Italy, a confederation of the Rhine. Nor had the late events affected only territorial limits and political institutions. The distribution of property, the composition and spirit of society, had, through a great part of Catholic Europe, undergone a complete change. But the unchangeable Church was still there."

How truly are our Lord's words verified, even from the viewpoint of profane history, that the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed! That seed developed into a plant, the plant into a tree with strong and hardy branches spreading on every side. What a contrast between the grain of seed and the full-grown tree! There is nothing, however, in the tree that had not its germ in the seed. The giant oak is contained in the tiny acorn. The tree that blooms so prolifically above all the plants and herbs is the identical tree that was germinating in the seed, no matter how insignificant that seed may have been.

And this is the true answer to the objections that are brought from time to time that the Catholic Church is no longer the same, and that she has changed with the ages. To state that a tree a thousand years old is not the same tree that was first planted and which produced this now ancient tree would be absurd, because it would mean that the seed never sprang up, and that consequently the tree had no origin. If the Church had never been given any divine charter of legislative power, or if she had usurped such a privilege in the course of time, then indeed might her divine claims be called in question; but since this charter of legislative power was conferred upon her by Christ Himself, it necessarily follows that the Church which can connect her growth of today with the Man who sowed the seed in His field is none other than the original tree which sprang from the seed which was sown in His field. Christ said to His apostles these memorable words: *All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations. . . . And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:18-20). *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you* (John 20:21), for the same divine end, and with the same divine power. *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven* (Matt. 16:19). *Feed My lambs . . . feed My sheep* (John 21:16-17).

Such powers have been ever exercised by the Church, beginning with the apostles and their lawful successors down to our own times. These powers were bestowed in general terms and were unlimited in their extent, to be used and administered for the good of the faithful, according to the needs of time and circumstance. In this

manner the Church grew, like the tree in the allegory, developing Christ's doctrine with her growth, just like the *faithful and wise steward whom the Lord setteth over His family, to give them their measure of wheat,* not indiscriminately, and in random fashion, but *in due season* (Luke 12:42). The history of the Church beautifully exemplifies the origin, growth, and development of the mustard tree, and likewise the exercise of those powers conferred on her by Christ for the good of His Church whenever necessity required them. For this very reason is she called the "Church of the Ages," because she has subsisted in all the ages of time, while each closing cycle is stamped with the hall-mark of her undying life.

Now the question may naturally arise: But what impression did the scarcely perceptible beginning of the infant Church make on the enemies of Christ after His Ascension into heaven? Then it was little more than a mere germ, almost imperceptible in the great bulk of human society. In numbers, it did not count; and even those who were known as members, were not great in either power, influence, or position. The Pharisaic party, headed by such avowed enemies as Caiaphas and Annas, must have thought to themselves, within a few days of Pentecost, that the time had at last come when the end of the imposter's religion was in sight; the insignificant seed sowed by the pseudo-Prophet of Nazareth had been crushed in the germ; His doctrine had been nothing but an upstart growth of no more than mushroom endurance; and the people of Israel will no longer be disturbed by what shall pass away like a vanishing ripple made by a pebble thrown into a stagnant pool. There was surely no further need for fear, much less for anxiety; for even His disciples were gone, whither no one knew,

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

and cared less. All the excitement over the Nazarene had been a huge deception which had wrought up the minds of our illiterate people, and which the Sanhedrin was justified in stamping out. What could there be of promise in what had begun so unpromisingly and terminated so disastrously?

It was the eve of the Great Pentecost when such vain conjectures seemed to satisfy the misgivings of the Pharisees and allay their apprehensions. *But the morning cometh, as well as the night;* and no sooner had the pentecostal fires come down upon the apostles, than they came forth into the full light of day, for everybody to know where they were, and to hear them preach Christ—the Light of the Christian world. To each other they impart the kiss of peace, and then set out for the conquest of the universe. Their ranks open to receive Paul, hitherto a persecutor of the newborn faith, now its most eloquent defender; and in the Gentile world, the most zealous of missionaries. He traversed Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and the islands of the seas as far as the boundaries of the West. The other apostles and disciples likewise went forth, as the credential witnesses of the messianic kingdom, bearing the mission of their Master to the utmost limits of the then-known world.

Who can imagine, judging from human standpoints, anything so weak and inadequate, when strength was called for, as this venturesome beginning? Take a glance at the pagan world of those days. The Roman Empire ruled with practically undisputed sway over the known world, and this for fifteen hundred miles to the north, east, and south of the Mediterranean Sea; and yet, while the second century is still young, Tertullian was

able to write: "We are but of yesterday and already we fill all that belongs to you; your cities, your islands, your forts, your towns and your councils, your camps, your Senate, your palaces and your Forum. We leave you nothing but the temple."

How different from the kingdoms of the world! These have a proud and ostentatious beginning, a gruesome and direful end; "towers as of Babel, which at first threaten to be as high as heaven, but end a deserted misshapen heap of slime and bricks; while the works of God, and most of all His chief work, His Church, have a slight and unobserved beginning with a gradually increasing and glorious consummation."

This idea has seldom been more graphically set forth than in the words of the illustrious Cardinal Manning: "The Appian Way, by which St. Peter entered Rome, has on either side the sepulchers of kings, of consuls, of patricians; the memorials of a kingdom, of a republic, and an empire. And as the Apostle, lone and weak, passed through these shades of departed greatness, to found in Rome the everlasting Church of God, he foreshadowed the path of that Church through the course of time. Empires, kingdoms, commonwealths, lie on either side of her road. And the shades of departed greatness and glory that is here no longer, hover, as it were, about her pathway whilst she goes on to the plentitude of her dominion, undying, imperishable, divine; fulfilling the promise of the Father: *Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool* (Ps. 109:1)."

This is the Church to which Christ walked over the waters, the Church of the catacombs, the Church that sat on Caesar's throne, the Church that educated and Christianized the barbarians, the Church that sanctified

the nations, the Church that withstood Eastern and Western schisms. The Church that came from the Mustard Seed is the identical One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, of St. Peter, and of Pius XI.

"The beauty of the mustard's broadening tree
Springing from tiniest seed—
Reaches afar in one vast dynasty,
One all-embracing creed;
A Maiden's lowly 'fiat' has been heard,
And all the earth is sheltered 'neath the 'Word.' "

CHAPTER V

Hidden Powers

A common but striking metaphor. Leaven often mentioned in Holy Writ. A symbol of good and evil. The leaven of the Pharisees. Their traditions. The sect of the Sadducees. The leaven in action. A true symbol of Christ's work in the Church. In the souls of men. An age of experiment. The mission of pagan Rome. Opposition to the leaven of the Gospel. The Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay. Fermentation of the divine word a preamble to conversion. The three measures of meal. Vain boast of Viviani. St. Paul's injunction to Timothy.

WHILE we continue our studies in the parables of the messianic kingdom, our divine Lord supplies us with a pleasing variety of illustrations which portray, with admirable skill, now in one way and now in another, the internal and external actions of divine grace in His Church here on earth. In the preceding parables He made use of the most commonplace things: seeds, both good and bad; various kinds of soil, rocks, plants, and trees, to explain the mysteries embodied in parable and allegory. He thus facilitated His work as a teacher, in driving the spiritual lessons home, enabling us to let them sink deeper into the human heart.

In this parable of the leaven we are introduced to something altogether different and quite out of the ordinary for a spiritual illustration; and yet there is, perhaps, no simile that could so well elucidate what Christ wished to portray, for the doctrine of His Church, as this simple and commonplace object lesson of the leaven. The Old Testament makes frequent mention of the use of leaven. We read in Genesis that three measures of flour was the usual quantity kneaded at a time by the

Jews (Gen. 18:6). Yeast is the modern word in our usage to express the leaven of ancient times. Leaven was prepared from the lees of wine; or a substance composed of meal, or flour and water, which had passed into an acid state till fermentation set in of itself. It is used to cause the dough to ferment in making bread, thus imparting to it a peculiar savor which renders the bread palatable and more easily digested.

In Holy Scripture the symbol of leaven is often used for something that is evil, rather than for something good. We have our Lord's authority and also that of St. Paul for this use of the leaven as a figure of what is evil. Christ dealt with three kinds of evil leaven, one of which He interprets to us as hypocrisy; it is the leaven to which teachers of religion may be most liable, as there is greater danger for them in this particular line than for others. Our Lord says: *Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees* (Matt. 16:6). In that passage our Savior tells us plainly that the leaven referred to is the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees which was discredited and condemned by Him as deceit and hypocrisy. At another time, still later in His ministry, St. Luke notes that when great multitudes stood about Him, so that they trod one upon another, He began to say to His disciples: *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy* (Luke 12:1). And in the account of a similar incident in the Gospel of St. Mark, we read that He made mention of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15).

St. Paul likewise speaks of the leaven in an evil sense: *Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened: for Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with*

the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5:7).

It is clear, therefore, that the leaven mentioned in this parable is Christ's own doctrine, by means of which He will raise mankind to that high state of supernatural life from which it fell because of original sin. Now it will help very much towards throwing light on this present parable to call to mind what Christ meant when He warned His apostles concerning the particular types of teachers He wished them to avoid. Among the many sects to be met with in Jewish history in the days of the Christ, the Pharisees and Sadducees were the most prominent. Our Lord often refers to both, and generally in terms of disapproval.

The Pharisees were supposed to have derived their appellation from a Hebrew word, *parash,* which means "separation," as if they were separated or set apart from others on account of their superior sanctity and learning. This sect exercised considerable influence with the rank and file of the upper classes, for they comprised among their followers many of the nobility and men who were held in high repute for learning, with not a few of Israel's illustrious women. Their power had reached its ascendancy prior to Christ's time, and so far did its influence extend as to be able to incite social upheavals to the extent of becoming quite a menace to their opposition in the government of Israel. They had acquired a reputation for sanctity and learning, but with God left out; and we can readily perceive how easily their sham spirituality gave way to unbounded pride. Hence their sense of religion was mostly external. It consisted of paying minute attention to certain ceremonial practices, and of professing even a stricter observance of the law

than was practiced by the rest of the people. Besides the written law and genuine traditions, which were never set aside by our Lord, they had numerous other laws and customs, propagated through their sect, which, being transmitted to them from the time of Moses, they claimed should be regarded with the same veneration as Holy Writ. They attached to these traditions even greater importance than to the Law itself (Matt. 7:9).

Besides their exaggerated traditions, their moral tenets and dogmatic teachings were made needlessly straight-laced, enforcing an extreme rigor for the observance of the Sabbath and branding every neglect of it as sinful. It was such traditions as these that Jesus Christ condemned; wherefore the Gospel records eight specific occasions on which He performed charitable works on the Sabbath-day, designedly, to shatter their exaggerated notions of extreme rigorism. Thus they perverted both the sense and the spirit of the law; and, because of this, they deserved just and severe censures from Christ.

The Sadducees were another class, a sect of unbelieving materialists; having denied the existence of angels and all spiritual beings except God Himself, they did not admit even the immortality of the soul, nor the resurrection of the body. Very likely they derived their name either from Sadoc, the founder of the sect, or from the Hebrew word *tsedk,* meaning "justice," since they claimed to make a rigid profession of that virtue. St. Jerome says they rejected the books of the Prophets, and were, in consequence, held to be lax in principle and moral practice. In comparison with the Pharisees, they had but little influence with the rank and file of the people; but like them, they held in contempt all others who dif-

ST. PATRICK, THE APOSTLE OF IRELAND

fered in the least from their teaching, barring the times when the scribes and Pharisees were allied with them in a combined effort to calumniate Christ and destroy His influence with the public.

Let us come to the meaning of the parable. *The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened* (Matt. 13:33). In the light of the historic setting just given, together with the figurative signification of the leaven employed by Christ, it is quite easy to interpret the hidden meaning of His illustration. What more realistic picture could even the Christ have drawn for the expansion of His kingdom on earth than that portrayed by the use of the leaven in this allegorical similitude!

Just as soon as the leaven is mixed with the meal or flour, the process of fermentation sets in. The fungus of the leaven, which can be observed only with the aid of a microscope, permeates throughout the inert mass. While its hidden properties become evident in the chemical change working in the dough, the carbonic acid gas formed by the chemical action of the leaven in the mass, causes the entire body to expand to three times its original size. There it is working in the midst of a shapeless, inert, sluggish substance; permeating, fermenting, changing the dead weight into a light and porous material which constitutes its excellence for the making of bread.

Commentators of Holy Writ logically infer, from the scope and meaning of this parable, the potential and far-reaching influence of the kingdom of Christ. Their inference is justly borne out by the verdict of history, for there is no fact that in our day confronts the thinking

man so forcibly as that of the origin, growth, and development of the Catholic Church from the days of her divine Founder down to the present time. Entire nations, inspired by the eloquence and attracted by the sanctity of a St. Boniface or a St. Patrick, have deserted paganism to embrace the truth of Christ. "We are living in an age of experiment—one that swears by experiment and is always asking to have everything proved by experiment. Here, then, we have an experiment of survival and growth that surpasses all the tests of the laboratory. The existence of the Church is the one outstanding fact of history. Her perpetuity is the one preeminent marvel of history. She has outlived every design for her destruction. And no design has been left untried to sweep her from the face of the earth."

God, in His wonderful, providential plan for the extension of the messianic kingdom, deigned to make use of instruments that, to all appearances, were totally inadequate to prepare the mass of mankind for the leaven of the Gospel. Men who had no intention of advancing the cause of Christ beyond their own selfish interests, and who cared little or naught for genuine Christianity, were, in spite of themselves, instrumental in stirring up the inert mass of pagan civilization. Even in pre-Christian times the Romans, working only for material conquests to extend the confines of their pagan empire, were actually contributing in the designs of Providence, towards the work which the leaven was to accomplish throughout the entire world through the preaching of the Gospel.

Old pagan Rome had a mission all her own. She built the famous military roads for the feet of the apostles to carry the name of Christ to the Gentiles. Her Roman

galleys swept the seas to speed the day when the leaven would be transmitted from shore to shore. Her iron laws welded the Empire into a compact unit that fitted the nations to be more securely shepherded into the fold of Christ. Her swords of steel kept the belligerent nations from war, making the world ready for the reign of the Prince of Peace; and when He came, she ascended the throne and proclaimed to the nations of the earth a peace that was universal. True, indeed, she persecuted Christ's Vicar, but the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians; and the leaven hid in the mass of pagan humanity had the effect of transforming weak women and cowardly men into Christians that were leavened in the mass of heroic mold.

What the leaven has done in the past is but an index of what it is doing today, and what it will inevitably do in future ages whenever the opportunities for its operations are at all favorable. And if at times it perchance may fail, the failure is due, not to the leaven itself, but to the hindrances that are set against it. For man is a free-will agent and is at liberty to choose as he lists. *God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel* (Eccles. 15:14). God, of course, can compel the unwilling mind, but He will not, for He does not want slave labor.

The world has been tireless in opposing the working of the leaven of Christ. Nations, one after another, have the historic record of their sins and schisms, their racial pride and national prejudices, which, together with penal laws and barbarous persecutions, were combined to thwart the function of the leaven in the rise of the messianic kingdom. But wherever the iniquity of man has not intervened in thwarting the accomplishment of the

divine plan, the most sanguine expectations were realized in a very striking degree. Given the necessary freedom of action, the Church has always and everywhere accomplished marvels both for the spiritual advancement and the material welfare of mankind.

Among the many instances in Church history which bear unquestioned testimony to the power of the leaven in the Gospel message, permit me to mention one in particular that looms up as an outstanding fact in the Catholic missions of the new world. We refer to the Christian settlements in the interior of Paraguay, which are known in history as the "Reductions." The Jesuits, having obtained from King Philip III of Spain a decree prohibiting Europeans to settle in or even to enter that country without permission, formed new settlements for the Christian natives. Then and there they showed what the leaven of the Gospel could do when not hindered by malicious speculators. In that land was accomplished, amid races so barbarous and so cruel that even the fearless warriors of Spain considered them irreclaimable, one of those triumphs of grace which Voltaire himself pronounced the "glory of humanity." Muratori says: "Those nations who were formerly like wild beasts in the woods, caves, and thickets, thinking only of murder and revenge, continually craving after human flesh, and wallowing in drunkenness and lust, those fierce wolves are now transformed into gentle lambs and harmless doves, exhibiting for the most part such modesty, charity, and devotion and blamelessness of life, that in them we see reproduced the first ages of the Church."

From this undesirable and, humanly speaking, unpromising material, taken from the sluggish strata of humanity, the leaven of the Gospel transformed savages

into Christians and saints. None of us, no matter how favorable the circumstances of our birth may be, are born either the one or the other. Original sin has been transmitted to us all. Christians are formed by the leaven of grace, and saints are the highest perfection to which that leaven can spiritually rise. It is a change from darkness to light. For this reason did St. Paul address his first converts: *You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph. 5:8). It is a change from inert, sodden weakness to an uplifting, virile strength.

And the divine work is not yet ended. The hidden force of the leaven is still at work, for Christ is working still, so much so, that He could say: *I am in labors from My youth* (Ps. 87:16). It is a noteworthy fact that when the leaven of the Gospel is first applied to the mind of an unbeliever, an intellectual fermentation is quickly aroused. So great is the power of the divine Word that even though there may be opposition on the part of him who receives it, yet it produces certain effects that are similar to a state of fermentation. It possesses a secret and hidden influence on the hearts of men in such a manner as to affect their lives for the better. This is more in evidence in proportion as all opposition to the Word is removed. Hence the Word of the Gospel is very fitly compared to leaven, since it has the effects of changing every action of man's life by spiritualizing it, just as the small tincture of leaven, which cannot be perceived in the mass, permeates the whole.

Modernism, with its silly boast, asserts that Christ is passing out of the world of men; Viviani, spokesman for its insolent blasphemy, with a flourish of rhetoric, raised his satanic shout in the French Chamber of Deputies twenty years ago: "We have put out forever the light

that shone in the heavens over Bethlehem." That was the raving of a depraved soul whose wish was father to his thought, for *the fool hath said in his heart: there is no God* (Ps. 13:1). But, the madness of fools notwithstanding, Christ is the Light of the world and the only beacon for man to look to in a world becoming now more and more obscured in its worse than Egyptian darkness. The dawn of a new day has not seen its close that we do not read or hear of generous souls who, illumined by that same light that shone over Bethlehem nineteen centuries ago, are setting out for the most distant lands, Alaska, China, or Japan, to light the torch of faith among the heathen in some remote part of the universe. We must remember, however, that the leaven is always small in comparison with the mass to be leavened. *The harvest is great, but the laborers are few* (Matt. 9:37).

The leading details of the parable, particularly the woman and the three measures of meal, furnish very interesting applications for the mystic sense of the leaven. *The woman* who took the leaven and used it, is, according to commentators, the Spouse of Jesus Christ, His Holy Catholic Church. To her safe-keeping was committed the true doctrine for the salvation of mankind. It was given in language so clear and unique that it stands without parallel in the history of any chartered commission that was ever intrusted to mortal man. On the upland slope of Olivet, shortly before that sublime finale of His earthly life, His glorious Ascension into heaven, our Lord communicated to the apostles His divine commission. *All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth; going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world (Matt. 28: 18-20).

The meal to be leavened represents the race of mankind, comprising the three great divisions of the ancient world: Europe, Asia, and Africa, with their distinct types of humanity—Sem, and Cham, and Japhet. In its ordinary state meal needs some preparation to fit it for nutrition, as it is naturally insipid; and so it was with the human race after the fall. Sin marred God's masterpiece in the darkness of man's understanding, the weakness of his will, and his strong propensity to evil. The gift of supernatural light and grace must now be infused into his soul to render it a fitting abode for the abiding presence of God. *Know you not,* writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, *that you are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwells within you?* (I Cor. 3:16). And to the Ephesians he writes: *We . . . . were by nature children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3).

When leaven is put into meal, we do not look for the leaven to be changed into meal, but we expect the meal to partake of the leavening process through the change made by the leaven. This was the very process employed by the apostles in the conversion of the nations; they made converts from paganism, as Christ made followers from Judaism. The leaven He used was no book, no matter how sacred its contents, but His own divine word. Wherefore St. John could say to the first Christians: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . . we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with*

us (I John 1:1-3). They preached a dogmatic, objective truth, and required of their adherents, after the example of their divine Teacher, an unflinching and implicit assent to the doctrines which they taught.

The great doctor of the Gentiles, in his letter to Timothy, followed exactly the same method of demanding implicit obedience to the teaching of the Gospel. *I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ . . . . preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat . . . . For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned into fables* (Tim. 4:1-4).

It is easy, then, to know where the true leaven of the Gospel is to be found. Surely not among the wrangling sects who, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, use a leaven of their own that was rejected by Christ. *Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees* (Matt. 16:6). *By their fruits you shall know them* (Matt. 7:16). You can see the divine leaven effecting its marvelous power through the Catholic Church. In that Church, faith enables man to undergo a thorough transformation; for like the saints, the more he adheres to it, the more perfect he becomes, until at last he can say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20). When the spirit of Christ takes possession of the human heart, the fleeting pleasures of the world lose their power to lead man astray; the beauty of God's truth becomes day by day more appealing. Then, indeed, is the whole man changed; his life is spiritualized, emitting a sweet odor of that heavenly leaven that works in the spiritual life within him.

"Stirred by the warmth of heaven,
The dull insensate clod
Shall burgeon forth in leaf and bud and flower;
Pulsate with faith's strong leaven,
Man's clay, breathed on by God,
Shall lift to grace and bear divinest power."

CHAPTER VI

Treasure-Trove

Meaning of the allegory. Hiding treasures a common custom in Syria and Palestine. Prospectors of the earth's treasures in our own time. The attitude of the casual discoveries. A law of exchange. Not perceived by the sensual-minded. Christian discernment of the treasure-trove. The gift of faith, what it means. A little child shall lead them. How conversion came to a Protestant minister's family. Trials to overcome. St. Augustine. Intellectual difficulties, so-called.

AFTER Jesus had spoken to the multitude on the parable of the leaven, the Evangelist says that He sent the people away, and came to *the house,* very likely the house that belonged to Simon Peter in or near Capharnaum, and there he spoke two parables to His apostles and disciples alone: the Treasure in the Field and the Pearl of Great Price. Both parables have the same object in common, the possession of something very highly prized; and though the motive set forth in each urged the finder of the treasure and the seeker of the pearl to undergo much sacrifice at very great expense, it will not be out of place to study the allegorical lessons in two separate chapters.

Though these two parables have reference to God's providential plan for the salvation of the human race in general, yet they were not addressed to the multitudes who thronged to hear our divine Lord, but rather to those who had a true esteem for the treasure which they had already found in their holy faith. In these two parables the lesson to be taken is precisely that personal initiative which urges the interested party to stop at no cost, to pay even the highest price, in order to secure the

possession of the treasure. Wherefore there is little of generalization, because the lesson to be drawn is obvious, so that even the rank and file can grasp what is required should the possession of the treasure involve the loss of their earthly possessions. Not all may be willing to pay the price that is here demanded for the possession of the field with the treasure; and few there are who have that keenness of perception to realize the intrinsic value of the pearl for its transcendent qualities. For these reasons our Lord sent away the multitude, they being yet too dull to comprehend the hidden meaning of these parables and altogether unprepared for the sacrifices which the new lessons necessarily entailed. The allegorical meaning of the parable is admirably clear, and is well calculated to make one think, whenever there is question of the personal element that now enters quite largely, because a sacrifice must be made, a price must be paid.

In all probability, the treasure spoken of in the simile was a considerable amount of money, either in gold or silver. Living as we are two thousand or more years from such circumstances as furnish the setting of the discovery of a treasure hidden in a field, it will help very much towards its practical elucidation to mention in passing the custom that obtained in the lands of the East, concerning one's personal treasures. Society in those remote ages was in a state of less security than it is today with us. This was due to the frequent change of dynasties and the chaotic upheavals which usually accompanied them. Men of ample fortune, for this reason, were accustomed to divide their wealth into three parts; one they invested in commerce, as a means for their necessary sustenance; one was expended in the purchase of jewels, which, in case of emergency, could be

easily safeguarded and taken with them; a third part they would hide secretly. This last was mostly in gold or silver, and being too heavy to carry, there was nothing else to be done except to hide it; wherefore they buried it as best they could, in their own or in some nearby field. But since they could rarely trust anyone with a knowledge of the place where the treasure was buried, its value was as good as lost if, perchance, they should not again return to the spot where it was concealed (Jer. 41:8).

Hence it should not surprise us overmuch when we read in books of adventure of the startling treasures that have been found in other lands, and which in our time sound more like fireside fairy tales. What would be a very rare occurrence in our day, owing to our modern commercial system of banks, would be no more than the natural consequence of the primitive system of concealing treasures in the ground, which was the general method of safeguarding the wealth of other days. The evidence of such methods is borne out by facts related even in Holy Writ. *And it cometh not, as they that dig for a treasure* (Job 3:21). *If thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as for a treasure* . . . . (Prov. 2:4).

Since it is not stated in the parable that the man who discovered the treasure was seeking after it before he found it, very likely he rather stumbled upon it accidentally, as it were unawares, while ploughing or digging as a workman in another field. So, too, some of the richest gold mines in our country, especially in California and Nevada, were discovered in very accidental and rather amusing ways. However, the lesson in the parable does not lose any of its force by this fact, for we have examples in our own times which admirably por-

tray the ardor that seizes men when they find the equivalent of a hidden treasure in certain parts of the United States, Alaska, and Mexico. No sooner does a prospector discover that oil is to be found in a certain field, than he begins at once to bargain for its purchase, keeping his motive, as well as the object of his quest, in the background. It is common for those who make such a discovery to sell what they can of their own holdings and even to go into debt to secure the treasure of oil that flows beneath the surface of the oil sands.

The example of the oil does not exactly correspond with the treasure that was found in the field, and which we are told the casual finder hid still deeper, but the instructive lesson in both cases is relatively the same. There is a difference, it is true, for the discoverer of the oil has no intention of sinking the oil any deeper, a practical impossibility; his one desire is to purchase the oil field and as soon as possible bring the oil to the surface.

The allegorical lesson of the treasure has a very distinctive feature of far-reaching consequence. It brings clearly before us three striking facts: the treasure itself, the manner in which it is found, and the attitude of the lucky discoverer. And since the lesson thus portrayed in the illustration is intended by Christ to let us know the inestimable riches of the messianic kingdom, it rests with us to draw from these three facts spiritual reflections that may influence us toward the finding and holding of this very great treasure. Here we have set before us, in no uncertain way, that when the discovery of the rare find is made, the fortunate finder realizes that the field contains a treasure of great wealth; and for that reason goes actually to work and leaves nothing undone to pur-

chase it. He is prepared to sacrifice his other possessions, should that be necessary, in order to possess what he has just discovered. Our Lord is now leading us to something out of the ordinary, and therefore an extraordinary means, a price that is very great, is taken to secure it.

But not all will pay the great price. However, there is a law of exchange that rules in every sphere of life; it is this: "To get you must give." It rules in the business world as well as in the intellectual world; and above all it rules in the spiritual world. It needs no depth of argument to convince a man with a gleam of reason that the kingdom of heaven, founded by Christ, holds out to all men riches of surpassing value; the difficulty is that all men have not developed the keen perception necessary to discern them. *But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God. For it is foolishness to him: and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined* (I Cor. 2:14).

It is because of this that worldly-minded people are, in Holy Writ, likened to "fools and children." Between fools and children there is this in common: neither of them have enough discernment or good sense to distinguish false stones from genuine and precious ones. In fact, a fool, like a child, is generally better satisfied with tawdry trinkets than with the richest jewels; we likewise find that the lovers of worldly pleasures are so much more taken up by vain and passing things, the toys and trifles of time. Again, like children, they are easily amused; and, like fools, they lose the substance for the shadow.

How different the discernment of the Christian soul concerning the relative values of temporal and eternal

things! In his epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul sums up their estimate of spiritual treasures by the sacrifices they made in order to secure the treasure which they found in their holy faith. *But others were racked, not accepting deliverance that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trials of mockeries and stripes: moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth* (Heb. 11:35-38).

The treasure found in the field is the treasure of supernatural faith. To secure it an exchange must be made in proportion to the value of the supernatural treasure discovered. He that finds it and wishes to retain it must be ready to give "all he has," if necessary, in exchange for it. The "all he has" is relative. It may mean as much to him who has but little, as to him who has great possessions. The giving of a cup of water is, apparently, a little thing; yet, because of the intention of the giver, this everyday courtesy is blessed with an eternal reward. The rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, on which Herod lavished the riches of his kingdom, did not elicit one word of passing approval from Christ; but He took care that the widow's mite should be traditionally known and remembered to the very end of time.

The true meaning of faith is not grasped by the many, and, in matter of fact, it is a term that is much misunderstood. Faith, in the language of St. Paul, is *the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not* (Heb. 11:1). Hence it is a source of

THE LAST PRAYER

knowledge and a means of attaining to the truth—the truth of divine revelation. Truth can be known in two ways, either by the aid of our own reason, or by learning it from others who know it and can be relied upon not to deceive us. Some things there are which we can find out for ourselves, because they are self-evident, as that the sun is in the heavens, and that the whole is greater than any of its parts; or because they are so intimately connected with what is self-evident that we can draw logical conclusions, such as the presence of smoke being an indication of fire—a conclusive deduction that an effect must have its natural cause. But not all things are known in this way. Indeed, the great store of human knowledge is not so much the work of man's personal investigation as what he has on trust from others. This, then, is faith, to believe what another tells us, to give our assent to something on the word of another. Taking this something on the word of man is human faith. Taking it on the word of God is divine faith, man's intellect assenting through God's grace co-operating. The Apostles' Creed is the depository of our faith, a bounteous field wherein treasures of grace are constantly found. *O Timothy,* St. Paul writes, ... *hold the form of sound words, which thou hast heard from me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us* (I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:13-14). "This I would urge first of all," writes Tertullian, "that Christ Himself established one thing, and that with certainty, which all nations are to believe absolutely. . . . . This is to be sought, until you find it; when found, believe it: and then do nothing further than hold what you have believed. This only

believe besides, that nothing else is to be believed, nor, therefore, to be searched for; since you have found and have believed what He established who hath not ordered you to search for aught save what He Himself established" (Prescript., c. 9; M. L. ii, 23).

The other consideration, which may be termed the high point of the parable, is the joy that the lucky finder experienced in his treasure-trove and which indicates the priceless value of faith. The ardor of his attitude in losing no time to possess the field is a keen appreciation that should characterize every man in quest of the everlasting treasure to be found in God's kingdom, for the eagerness manifested in negotiating the purchase evoked the highest commendation from our divine Lord. He went and sold all that he had hitherto acquired; neither did he experience any sadness but rather the greatest joy in arranging for his transaction.

There is no misgiving here as to the point to be taken by everyone who is honest enough to know and realize the value of eternal possessions. No other meaning can be taken from the allegorical lesson so graphically set forth by Christ. Man must give up what he has, should it seem evident as a necessary condition for the purchase of heavenly treasures; and his sacrifice, in parting with all, will be as lucratively rewarded as that of the man in the parable who found the treasure and went and sold all that he possessed in order to purchase the field for the treasure-trove it contained.

The Jewish people were in possession of the field, but they failed to find the treasure of their hidden God. In their day and in their midst stood the Christ, but they knew Him not. Later on the Gentiles came and, after discovering the treasure, took over the field which they pos-

sess to this very day. In his epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul has made us aware how much they valued the treasure which they found in the field of the Gospel; for it they parted with all they possessed, even the precious treasure of life itself.

It is a time-honored conviction that a man's conduct is the net result of his practical ideas of things, and is, in most cases, the index of his character; hence, ordinarily speaking, we cannot pass a better judgment of the value he sets upon goods than by the price he is willing to expend for their purchase. The practical truth of this is evident when spiritually applied by honest, God-fearing non-Catholics as soon as they first begin to discern the credentials of the Catholic Church. It is indeed a rather common experience that their discovery of the treasure of the true faith is brought about in ways altogether unexpected and seemingly unawares. For some the occasion was a lingering illness in a Catholic hospital where the attentive care and kindly influence of devoted sisters have ever had so much to do in disclosing the treasure of the faith to those who had no thought of finding, much less of looking for, it.

It may happen, too, that the words of Holy Writ: *A little child shall lead them* (Isa. 11:6), are much oftener true to life than most of us are inclined to suspect. So often it happens nowadays that many of our excellent non-Catholics, with a view to securing results in keeping with their high ideals, will send their children to our Catholic colleges and academies; not because of our faith, but for our training; not out of love for us, but of themselves, through a sheer necessity of getting something in the line of moral worth which the world, perforce, must admit is to be found in its perfection through the

educational system of the Catholic Church. The mind of a child is keenly quick to discern truth. This is quite noticeable, especially in regard to supernatural truth. For, as a rule, children are not prejudiced; and, when the reasons for divine faith are made known, the human mind, having a natural attraction for truth as its proper object, begins at once to look into the truths of faith and is seldom at rest until its quest is satisfied. Thus the child becomes the one who leads its parents into the true fold.

Without going into the field of history or romance, both of which abound with striking examples of cases now in point, permit me to quote from personal experience one which happened while I was conducting a retreat for young women attending a summer school.* When the retreat was drawing to its close, the retreatants, according to custom, came to seek advice from the spiritual director. On this occasion two young women, sisters, came to consult me about convent life. They soon let me know that they were both converts, but not wishing to pry into their family affairs, I simply remarked that their parents might, perhaps, object to their entering a religious community. "No, Father," was the immediate reply, "for our father is a priest and mother is dead."

Noticing my surprise, which I was not quick enough to check, one of them ventured an explanation. "Father," she said, "it was this way. Our father was a Protestant minister, and mother brought us up as strict Protestants. When we were about fourteen they decided to send us to a boarding school, and the strange part of our story

* Retreat given at Forest Ridge Convent, Seattle, June, 1924.

is, they both agreed that the best place for our training and education would be a convent school. They sent us to the Convent of —— in the East. We followed the regular course, but never had any notion of becoming Catholics. Nor did the sisters ever make any suggestion that we should embrace Catholicism. But when we went home for our annual and mid-year vacations, we gave father no rest with questions about religion; for we were anxious, now more than ever, to get some definite knowledge about our own Protestant belief. Then our father began to ask us questions about what we knew of the Catholic Church. We were able to answer all his inquiries satisfactorily, for Sister Mary Crozier was an excellent teacher and knew her apologetics well. To make a long story short, father gave up his ministry and the family went to live in the town of ——. A little later our parents were both received into the Catholic Church. Mother died a few years after, and that left father free to go to a seminary, where he was ordained a priest and is now the Catholic pastor of St. Mary's Church in an Eastern city."

How unexpectedly the treasure of divine faith was disclosed to the household of that once Protestant family! And God made use of children to reveal the hidden treasure. "A little child shall lead them," is as true today as it ever was! In many such unlooked-for ways the treasure of faith is often so discovered; and, though there is joy and eagerness in possessing it, yet who can tell how great was the cost of the sacrifice for those who had to give up all to possess it? Indeed, it involves much more than we, who fell heir to the heritage of the faith from our very childhood, can even approximately realize. The very reflection that non-Catholics themselves were

born into another creed; that they must show some consideration for their co-religionists or to the church of their baptism; and what is more telling still, that change of faith may involve social standing, alienate lifelong friendships, grieve parents, bar the way to class distinction, and even entail at times much financial loss—all this complexity of circumstance must certainly have weight which must be outweighed by some other overwhelming consideration—the truth of Catholic faith when thrown into the balance of the non-Catholic mind.

The history of the Church here in our own country and across the sea furnishes striking examples of men and women of prominence who parted with great wealth, and had to sacrifice what we have now referred to in order to possess the treasure which they found in the field of Catholic faith. Just a few days ago, in an evening newspaper,* the Associated Press wired this dispatch from New York City: "Grace Minford, a nun, refused to share a $2,000,000 estate of her father, Lewis Minford, which she might have if she renounced her faith. She said her reward was infinitely greater." But even though such a great price together with the pain of parental disinheritance was involved in the possession of her hidden treasure, nevertheless, to the one who so magnanimously made the willing sacrifice, it has become a source of supreme joy in the moral assurance of predestination through the divine exchange made by renouncing the temporal for the eternal—the treasure of earth for the kingdom of heaven.

In the life of St. Augustine we get another glimpse of the truth of this beautiful allegory from his own experi-

* *The Fairbanks News-Miner,* Fairbanks, Alaska, Jan. 6, 1928.

ence. In the joy of his own conversion, after giving up all that savored of the world and sin, he describes how easy it became, having found the treasure, to give up all which he so long dreaded giving up for this very joy. "How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetness of those joys, and what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with. For Thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou Highest Sweetness. Thou castest them forth and instead of them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure." Augustine found true joy in giving up the sinful delights of a worldly life; he went and sold all that he possessed to buy the field in which he found the treasure of the true faith.

Those who are not ready to pay the price should not complain when the graces and blessings of the heavenly kingdom are denied them; for here, too, there is the unwritten law of exchange: "To get, you must give!" Once we appreciate what the kingdom of heaven means to us, there will be no further difficulty in withdrawing ourselves from whatever might hinder us to seek and find it; even though the conditions laid down by Christ in the allegory may be hard and trying to nature, yet they are precise and decisive: All for All!

Let us also observe that he who found the rich treasure sought eagerly to possess it by purchasing the field, for that is the meaning of *he went;* he disposed of all he had in order to acquire this one possession. Learn, too, the obvious lesson which is further implied: That it does not suffice merely not to be troubled if we have to forego what is costly for the sake of our faith; but this must be done joyfully, for we should be prepared to regard such losses as the greatest gain. We marvel at times why certain people apparently fail to value the

treasure that is to be found only in the Catholic faith. But one of the greatest obstacles to belief is a life at variance with the law of God and His Church. The pride of life plays havoc with minds that are alienated from God by sin; for, like Augustine, man must deny himself pleasures in which he delights, he must contend with trials from which nature shrinks. And because such a course of action is necessary to acquire the gift of faith, it is evident that a man who walks in the world's ways, and hankers after the world's pleasures, must have bristling difficulties to surmount if he is to possess the faith and belong to the Church when her credentials are made known to him.

Such people may tell us that their difficulties in the way of embracing the faith are intellectual. For some, this may be an easy way out, but experience in dealing with this class of the so-called intellectual type convinces us only too clearly that their difficulties must be diagnosed along other lines. Thus did St. Paul diagnose the case of Felix:

After some days, Felix, coming with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jew, sent for Paul, and heard of him the faith that is in Christ Jesus. And as he treated of justice and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix being terrified, answered: For this time, go thy way; but when I have a convenient time, I will send for thee (Acts 24: 24). As it has been with Felix, so it is with so many others who have an opportunity to know something of the true faith in all the ages since Christ made His revelation and founded His Church. By the mercy of God they are brought to a knowledge of what the virtue of faith implies; but to accept its teaching and become active participants in its spiritual life, they must live by

justice and *chastity,* and the practice of other Christian virtues; and keep within the shadow *of the judgment to come.* But this, the rank and file of the so-called intellectuals will not do, as these things are not easy of accomplishment for sensual, worldly-minded men. Little wonder, then, that so many have not even the wish to believe, or that they should, like Felix, dismiss the divinely sent teachers of truth: *For this time, go thy way; but when I have convenient time, I will send for thee.*

"Am I mad that I should cherish
That which bears but bitter fruit?
I will tear it from my bosom
Though my heart be at the root."

CHAPTER VII

A Costly Sacrifice

St. Augustine's distinction of the Hidden Treasure and the Precious Pearl. The value of some pearls. Spiritual application of the allegorical lesson. Christ and the Rich Young Man. St. Aloysius and the counsels. Obstacles in the way. Attitude of practical, devout Catholics. St. John Chrysostom. Christ's appeal, a hard saying. Not sentimental but preferential love involved in the sacrifice. The apostles and the counsels. Systematic provision in the Church in regard to them. Vows no hindrance to initiative or efficiency. The doctrine of self-denial, its far-reaching effects. St. Paul and the Cross.

AT first sight it may seem superfluous to look for a new object lesson in the present parable of the pearl, for the object itself, as well as the motive, that urged the pearl-seeker to part with all he had to possess this rare gem, appears to be identical with the object and motive that were set forth in the preceding parable of the Treasure in the Field. But the identity is only apparent, for there is a difference in the instructive lessons that are to be drawn from both parables. They have this in common, that the man who accidentally finds the treasure and the merchant who seeks the pearl start out with a proper estimate of the prize for which they had to expend so much. St. Augustine pointedly remarks: "In the former parable, the kingdom of heaven is presented as manifold, even as a treasure would contain precious things of various kinds laid up in it; now it is presented in its unity, as much as to say: 'This which is so multifold is also single and at heart but one.' "

There is also to be considered in the present parable that which very much enhances its value as a fitting

image to set forth the high esteem each one must have for the kingdom of heaven. There is the very nature of the pearl itself, its rare beauty, translucent splendor, and surpassing luster, all its own. Among the ancients rare stones of various kinds were highly prized, especial value being set on pearls. Men as well as women were slaves to the passion for jewels, and the diamond, ruby, emerald, sapphire, amethyst, and topaz held a high place among the fanciers of precious stones; but amongst all the gems the fine pearls always demanded the highest price. Pliny, the historian, informs us that one of the pearls of Cleopatra would exceed the value of an entire estate. In the reign of the Emperor Charles V, a pearl in the Spanish treasury was sold for $190,000, and amongst the jewels of the Shah of Persia was a pearl valued at $650,000.

When we add to this the great risk that is connected with pearl-seeking, and the few remote places in which the pearl fisheries are located, likewise the dangers attending pearl-diving, to say nothing of the professional training a pearl lapidary must acquire before being skilled as a connoisseur, we are given a study which for beauty and thought and sublime aspirations stands alone amongst the select parables of the Gospel.*

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* The real pearl oyster is found especially in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea; also on the coasts of America and on the islands of the Great Ocean. At the present day they are found particularly on the coast of Western Australia. The pearl fishing, which is attended by much danger, is carried on at the present time in those places by the inhabitants every year from June to the middle of September, and, as a rule, with success. Wealthy merchants, at that time, journey to the specified places on the coast in order to forestall others in the purchase of the harvest which divers bring up from the depths of the sea (*The Parables* by Fonck, S. J., p. 196).

CHRIST AND THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Although the parable of the treasure found in the field brings before us a spiritual appreciation of our holy faith in general, the leading thought of this parable of the pearl, as well as the attitude of him who sought it, is typical of an extraordinary spiritual grace that is found only by the few. Wherefore, in the present parable there are certain features that distinguish it from the former —features which also confirm this view of adapting the allegory of the pearl to typify the highest appreciation that man can have for his immortal soul.

The details of the parable are varied. Here there is no accidental, lucky finding of a treasure as in the former illustration of the field; but there is diligent seeking until what is sought is at last found after long and painstaking search. Also, in the former parable, the words, *is like,* refer to the prominent idea in the image, that is, to the treasure. But now: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant* (Matt. 13:45). In the preceding parable the kingdom of heaven is referred to a thing; here it refers to a person. In the quest for the heavenly kingdom Christ would have us imitate the merchant whose one desire was the possession of the pearl.

It is also worthy of note that it does not take an expert to estimate the value of a treasure even though he should find it accidentally, as it is not difficult to know the value of glittering coins; but to estimate the worth of a precious pearl calls for the discerning skill of a professional lapidary. Many, indeed, are the spiritual applications which may be drawn from the quest of the pearl now portrayed in this parable; there is one, however, which seldom fails to attract the attention of souls desirous of the closest possible following of Christ. Spiritually applied, as a practical application to seek the pearl of great

price, the vocation to follow the divine counsels stands out prominently and deserves our special attention. In the excellent and surpassing qualities of the pearl, the riches of this state are clearly set forth.

When the rich young man came to our Lord and questioned Him as to what he should do to possess life everlasting, Christ simply told him to keep the commandments, as that was sufficient to secure the treasure he had already found in their observance. Though his inquiry was, indeed, completely answered, yet he seemed to wish to know more, for he had observed the commandments from his youth; and again he inquired: *What is yet wanting to me?* (Matt. 19:20). Jesus then said to him: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me* (vs. 21).

Here our divine Lord gave him a realization of the precious pearl of great price which was to be sought in His kingdom, making known to him, at the same time, the high price which he must pay to possess it! Go and sell all and give to the poor. *And when the young man had heard this word, he went away sad: for he had great possessions* (vs. 22). In his estimation the price of the spiritual pearl was evidently too high. He lacked the acumen of the soul to estimate the value of the pearl at its true worth, and went his way. Evidently disappointed, Jesus said to His disciples: *Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven* (vss. 23-24).

The life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga furnishes a most striking example of how eagerly he sought the pearl of

great price in leaving all to follow the divine invitation. While a mere youth in his father's house, he anxiously looked forward to possessing the precious pearl which Christ offered to the rich young man of the Gospel. Our saint had, indeed, a true estimate of its sterling worth, for he took as addressed to himself the words of the Psalm: *Blessed is he whom Thou has chosen and taken to Thee; he shall dwell in Thy courts* (Ps. 64:5); this together with the graces which he knew in time would enrich his soul enabled him to thrust aside whatever obstacle came in his way. He parted with all he possessed because of the joy he experienced in purchasing at a great price this jewel of the kingdom of heaven.

It is only when a man appreciates the intrinsic value of the object of his purchase that his attitude towards it is properly understood. With this estimate kept in mind, he is enabled to hold fast to what he has acquired, without experiencing one moment of regret for the price he has had to pay in making the costly purchase his own. How different the attitude of the two rich young men! One comes to Christ and goes away sad, still clinging to his worldly possessions; the other comes to Christ and stays with Him, joyful after giving up all his earthly treasure. The name of Aloysius is immortal; that of the rich young man is unknown even in the land of his birth.

To purchase the precious pearl of a vocation which aims at the state of perfection supposes a desire to go beyond what is attained by the observance of the Ten Commandments. True, indeed, their observance is all that is necessary for the winning of life eternal; but, said our divine Lord: *If thou wilt be perfect . . . .* (Matt. 19:21). This is a counsel, not a command; we are left quite free to embrace or to reject it, just as the spirit

lists with us. Our choice is free, but once made, there should be no turning back, for we have the Divine Word for it that *no man putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:62).

There is question now of that keen perception of the value of the pearl. The merchant who sought and found it had to go and sacrifice all his other possessions to buy it. This pearl, it goes without saying, is not material but spiritual; hence the sacrifice involved in its acquisition is far more costly than that of the material wealth expended in the purchase of any jewel on earth. It is altogether beyond the ken of worldlings to grasp the willing readiness with which this sacrifice is so often made; the perception required for the intelligent understanding of the act of renunciation lies outside their mental sphere, and for this very reason the arguments they advance in hindering some member of the household from following the divine counsels are, to say the least, selfish, if not absurd. Since the making of the sacrifice is spiritually beyond themselves, they become all the more unreasonable and actually go out of their way in preventing others from following a vocation which is practically no concern of theirs, and pertains only to the one who is chosen for this higher state.

Among devout and well-instructed Catholics this divine invitation of following the counsels is readily understood; and, to their honorable credit, let it be said, they leave nothing undone to help an aspiring candidate on the way the Holy Spirit directs. In fact, it is a cause of supreme joy to the truly Christian household when the Lord selects one or more to be associated with Himself in the most divine of all divine works for the salvation of souls. They realize that religious perfection is

a special grace, and not the perfection of ordinary Christians, but a precise and definite kind which was suggested by our divine Lord Himself as a counsel for those who have the generosity to leave all to follow Him.

"Oh, may we follow undismay'd
Where'er our God shall call!
And may His Spirit's present aid
Uphold us lest we fall!
Till in the end of days we stand,
As victors in a deathless land."

St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the allegorical scope of the divine simile, notes: "We learn here not only that we must give up everything and adhere to the Gospel, but also that we should do this gladly; for whosoever gives up his possessions must know that to do so is a profitable transaction and that he suffers no loss. Dost thou not perceive how, while the Gospel is hidden in the world, all riches are also hidden in the Gospel? Unless thou sellest all, thou canst not buy it; and if thou dost not seek it eagerly, thou canst not find it. Thus two things must happen: Thou must give up external possessions, and thou must watch. For he says: it is like *a merchant seeking good pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price . . . sold all that he had, and bought it* (Matt. 13:46). For there is but one truth, and not many. And, as the man with the pearl does, indeed, himself know that he is rich, but others know nothing about it, even when they have it in their hands, for, indeed, it has no great size; so is it also with the Gospel: those who possess it know that they are rich, but unbelievers who do not recognize this treasure, know nothing of our riches" (M. 58, 483 et seq.).

This following of Christ, aiming at perfection, includes all that is contained in the Gospel, both precepts and counsels, not only those of obligation, but likewise those of one's own choice. And this invitation of Christ is of a piece with that other doctrine of His, an apparently hard saying which says: *If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:26). *So, likewise, every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:33). Discrimination is here even with regard to the nearest and dearest in life; yea, even with regard to life itself. He who would follow is given to understand that Christ must be loved more than father or mother, for He emphasizes the act of the renunciation by saying: *He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me* (Matt. 10:37). To many, doubtless, our Lord's words are a "hard saying," but the harshness is only apparent. He wants us to realize that our love for Him is a *preferential love,* since He also demands that we should have other forms of love, filial and social, each to hold its own in due measure and in its proper sphere. For it is not that He would divert to Himself the natural love of children for their parents. That is theirs, and that, too, by His own ordaining. Should, however, a time come when a choice has to be made, the preferential love is His, and must be given to Him alone.

If any man come to Me. This proposal of Christ now evidently takes on a fixed purpose with telling significance. *If!* This new manner of following Christ is doubtless an open question, and is kept open by the many. All followers of Christ must practice detachment

from earthly goods according to their state; but He insists upon the most incisive detachment on the part of those who are following Him in the choice of the counsels in the religious state. Hence, no sooner did the apostles realize the value of the precious pearl implied in the close following of Christ, than St. Peter, spokesman for the rest, as for himself, laid down the stipulated price: *Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?* (Matt. 19:27). And Jesus said to them: *Amen I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting* (vss. 28-29).

Attending merely to the literal wording of the question put by St. Peter, it would seem at first hearing to convey a rather self-seeking return for the service he was rendering his divine Master; but if we look closely into the interview that first brought Peter to Christ, we shall see that the very manner in which he puts his apparently ignoble question, exculpates him from the taint of every ignoble interest. No sooner had Peter and his associates in the fishing trade become acquainted with our Lord than, fascinated by His peerless personality and carried away by the spell of His divine goodness, they rose up and left all to follow Him. There were no business calculations made then; there were none of the articles of agreement reminding us of those that are drawn for the security of an insurance policy; there was none of the motive "Quid erit nobis?" when they left their boats and

fishing nets high and dry on the sandy beach at Capharnaum. It was love at first sight, and love does not reason by syllogisms, but, quicker than reason, it acts promptly to follow the Beloved, even blindfolded, *whithersoever he goeth,* be it to prison or death, triumph or defeat, just as in the first hour of danger at Gethsemane, Peter's love, swifter than his reason, broke forth: *Lord I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death* (Luke 22:33).

This "Quid erit nobis?" of St. Peter following the statement of a plain fact made by Christ to the rich young man, when He said to him: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow Me* (Matt. 19: 21), is the anxious wonder naturally aroused in the mind of the apostle, as to what this treasure in heaven might be, which Christ now promised to those who should do what they had already done. Our Lord makes His promise general so as to include not only the apostles but all those who would follow their example: *Amen, I say to you . . . . every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting. And many that are first, shall be last: and the last shall be first* (Matt. 19:28-30).

Peter and his companions had already accepted Christ's apostolic invitation. They were associated with His interests long before the incident referring to the rich young man had taken place; and this choice of Christ, on their part, was a spontaneous act for love of Him alone, rather than for the sake of aught that He might yet give them. To them He, indeed, was their only treasure, their one pearl of great price, rather cheaply

purchased when we consider the *all* they left, including their broken nets on the sand beach by the inland sea of Genesareth. They, indeed, were to gain everything, and perhaps precisely because they sought nothing. They were too noble to strike a good bargain, too impersonal to be selfish, and, because of blind obedience in their response to Christ's loving invitation, they had left all. Now they were to find all—a hundredfold in this life, in spite of persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting.

This new state of life, unknown before Christ's time, established by Himself for the sublime purpose of the close imitation of His own divine life, is known as *the Way of the Counsels.* To all who have the love and generosity of the divine imitation, He says to each one in particular: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor . . . . and come follow Me.* How is this following of Christ possible in an up-to-date and matter-of-fact world such as we must now live in? We are no longer in the days of the first Christians, when they practiced the pure socialism of the Gospel after they had divided all their earthly goods with their brethren.

The Church has wonderfully and systematically provided for this emergency in the establishment of the various religious orders in the course of her existence. Not only has she proclaimed the doctrine of the Counsels by word of mouth, but she has provided for its continuance in the encouragement she has ever given to the youth of both sexes to consecrate their lives to voluntary poverty under the sanction of the most sacred engagements, the religious vows. She permits them, if only they are called to that holy state by God, to seal

their contract with poverty and to make her their bride as she also was the bride of Christ.

"Here man more purely lives, less oft doth fall,
More promptly rises, walks with nicer heed,
More safely rests, dies happier, is freed
Earlier from cleansing fires and gains withal
A brighter crown."

We hear it sometimes said that the apostles took no vows. Since it is exceedingly difficult for anyone to prove the statement of a purely negative proposition with any positive proof, we can let the assertion pass as irrelevant. It is enough for us to know that they practiced the Evangelical Counsels, and for this, have we not the lives of the first Christians as a proof of the example they received from the teaching of the apostles?

The very idea of a vow seems to jar with many of the sentimental notions of our modern manner of living; and the jar is most sensitively felt in the lives of those who get most of their thinking done in the columns of current literature. Such an altruistic sacrifice is put down as an infringement upon human liberty. But there can be no infringement of liberty to be bound by the law of God to do right instead of wrong; nor can it be termed a violation of one's liberty when by a self-imposed obligation we freely bind ourselves to do better instead of well.

The second way of imitating the perfection of Christ's life consists in the willing and free renouncement of what may be lawfully practiced in the common life by most people. Since our Lord wished to give a perfect model of this special perfection to those who were to follow Him, He did not come amongst us an example of

conjugal perfection, but as a Virgin, born of a Virgin; His foster father a virgin, his herald a virgin, the friend of His bosom a virgin. It was because of His divine purpose to exalt this perfection to the very highest standard that He embraced it and gave it to His closest friends to embrace. He wanted an impure and prostrate world to take heart and look for strength in the example and reverence He Himself showed for virginity; to look to it as the very glory of human dignity, the true mastery of the spirit over the most telling exactions of the flesh; and to carry out that divine injunction He gave the motive to His very own: *Be holy because I am holy* (Lev. 11:44). *Be perfect . . . . as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. 5:48).

The third method of perfect imitation in following Christ comes before us in that hardest of all hard self-denials, the spirit of perfect obedience. Obedience is the foundation of all harmony and order not only in the home, but in every department of a nation's welfare. The individual who vows his life to obedience in the religious state may be thought by some to part with his individuality or to lose his so-called initiative. It is not so. The great evil of our times is the spirit of self-seeking in the home and in politics; the common good is seldom considered. Our Lord would have us realize the truth of this when He said so pointedly: *He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it* (Matt. 10:39). Self is found in the suppression of self, just as true life is found in the seeming loss of life. In this very system of the Counsels, where men lose sight of self for the sake of that self they are to find in others, the Church has been admirably well fitted to take care of the various activities set forth by Christ Himself in

the classroom, in the hospital, the orphanage, homes for the aged, and kindred institutions.

Such are the three counsels of the Gospel. As some would have it, they are three nails by which the religious fastens his life to the Cross of Christ. By so doing he consecrates his life irrevocably to the service of God alone and through Him to the most altruistic service of humanity. He locks the fetter and throws away the key, for it is a life-love; and when duly made and properly understood, there can be no divorce. For this reason the Church solemnly accepts the sacrifice, because she has made the observance of the Counsels constitute the perfection of the religious state.

She took the hated gibbet and lifted it high above her altars for men to bow down and worship what the world spat upon and trampled under foot; so, too, by the existence of the religious orders in their profession of the Evangelical Counsels, she keeps before the world the true spirit of Christ and teaches all to love and reverence; and, should God make His wish known, to embrace a life of sacrifice hallowed by the sacred ensign of the Cross.

And what does the Cross mean today? There are a few strong words which Christ connected with its mystic symbolism that enable us to grasp its import. He says: *If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me* (Mark 8:34). The cross is essentially a symbol of self-denial. But has it always that meaning now? In our day it is often regarded as a nice ornament, a pretty emblem to wear, something as a pendant on a gold chain to attract attention. It looks so beautiful, too, in costly flower designs, and in jewelry of artistic finish, for an artist is not a

photographer, and the representations of the Cross with which we are familiar show little of its real horror. Though there is nothing amiss in idealizing the cross, making the figure of our dying Savior attractive and beautiful, revealing to the eye the loveliness really there; yet, to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the apostles of His time, the cross had a grim and hard and painful significance.

If any man will follow Me. Obviously this language of Jesus, taken from its original setting, begins to assume a new significance. It implies a fixed purpose. The word *will* is one of the strongest in our language; it deals with the highest prerogative of man, the power to accept or reject. The will is the autocrat on the throne, the judge on the bench of final appeal; and in Christ's appeal to the human will He is getting down to the very root of what matters in human nature. He is now appealing to the highest authority which involves surrender; hence, no passing sentiment, no mere momentary enthusiasm will suffice to follow, but a fixed purpose, calmly, resolutely settled upon, rooted away down deep in the very vitals of the will, no matter what it may cost or where it may cut.

Well did St. Paul understand this *hard saying* when he wrote to the young Christians of Galatia: I am *crucified . . . . to the world* (Gal. 6:14); and to the unknown friends at Rome: *If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live* (Rom. 8:13). He was the first to boast that the world was crucified to him, and he to the world: *God forbid,* says he, *that I should glory in anything save only in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. 6-14). That was, indeed, a proud boast to make in the very stronghold of rank paganism. On St. Paul's lips it

is truly sublime and rings genuine with Christian heroism. Since that far-off time, the cross has been so highly honored, it is become such an endearing object of devotion and veneration, so richly enshrined with the aureole of artistic worth by the skill of poet and painter and sculptor, that St. Paul's words now no longer sound like frenzied madness in our ears. But to return to those olden days, to the time when men looked upon crucifixion as we do today on the scene of the electrocution chair, or on the deadly gas of the lethal chamber, or the gruesome scaffold outside the convict's cell, and felt as little reverence for the cross as we do now for the hemp in the hangman's rope; then it was quite another matter to boast of being crucified with Christ. Were we to substitute gallows instead of cross, and hanged instead of crucified, we might get the full realization of what it meant when St. Paul, nineteen centuries ago, made his proud boast in the historic city of Galatia.

The pseudo-Christian philanthropy of our age would take Christ down from the Cross, but let it not forget that He hung there of His own free choice; and that, too, in our stead, in order that we, like St. Paul and the Christians of his time, may have the courage to hang there beside Him. The world at large does not understand the lesson of the cross, and hence it cannot appreciate the beauty of the heavenly pearl, as it does not realize the underlying motive of the sacrifice that is offered on the altar for its possession. Because of this, it is so often given to cynical criticism in the words of the Book of Wisdom: *These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach* (Wisd. 5:3). But the religious who leaves all to get the precious pearl may well remember those other lines of poetic inspiration:

"Dreamers of dreams, we take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God, beyond the years you see,
Hath wrought the dreams that count with you for madness
Into the substance of the life to be."

CHAPTER VIII

A Marvelous Contrivance

A commonplace similitude. Providential choice of the apostles. The fishing net, a marvelous contrivance for its purpose. The fisherman's toil. His qualifications. The net in the sea, a figure of the Church. The single thread in the net of divine faith. Assorting the catch. Citation from SS. Chrysostom and Gregory. The apostles made fishers of men. The bark of Peter. Eloquent testimony of Protestant historians. Weak things chosen to confound the strong. Moral scope of the parable. Final assortment at the end of the world.

TAKING up the study of one parable of the Gospel after another, we are introduced to a pleasing variety of illustrations which portray, each in its own way, a new glimpse of the messianic kingdom—Christ's Church on earth. The treasure hid in the field, and the precious pearl of great price naturally aroused our interest, for all are interested in finding treasures; and where is the one who does not rejoice in the discovery of precious pearls?

This particular parable, The Fishing Net, brings our thoughts down to the plane of the common, for fishermen, nets, and fishes are among the ordinary occurrences of life; whereas treasures hid in the ground and pearls found in the bed of the sea are rare and seldom discovered. However, this simple illustration of the net, with its everyday story of the sea, is withal a high-class thoughtful study which in the mind of Christ admirably illustrates the spiritual concern everyone should have for himself here as well as for his hereafter. It is well, too, to remember that our divine Lord was dealing with men who were called from their fishing nets to the sub-

lime vocation of the apostolate; for at least six of the apostles were fishermen: Peter and Andrew, James and John, Thomas and Nathaniel. Philip also came from the fishing village of Bethsaida; nor was it mere chance occurrence, but a wise ordination of Providence that the apostles were chosen from the ranks of fishermen, that from Peter's bark Christ stilled the tempest and taught the multitude, and that, at the bidding of his Master, Peter launched into the deep and caught the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5:6).

Christ says: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt. 13:47-50).

Lake Tiberias, also named the Sea of Galilee, memorable in the apostolate of our Lord's life because of the miracles He wrought on its storm-tossed billows, likewise renowned for the lavish fertility of its lovely shores, was noted both for the quantity and quality if its many kinds of fish. As many as twenty-two different varieties abounded even among the common kinds; and Flavius Josephus tells us that the fish in the Sea of Galilee, owing to their special flavor, were different from the fish found in other waters. Wherefore, this image of the kingdom of heaven in this parable gives pointed significance to the great work of the apostolate in the history of the Church, and serves perhaps better than any other to explain to us many of those perplexing anomalies and

seeming contradictions which at times beset devout minds in their faith.

The fishing net, and particularly a trawling net, is rather a coarse contrivance, made in the most simple fashion. It has great length and narrow width, with corks to keep it afloat on the surface of the sea, and leaden sinkers to hold its meshes stretched towards the bottom. Too, the life of a fisherman is often classed with those of the lower walks of life, and, in a sense, the classification may not be incorrect, since anyone however unlettered may succeed in taking up such an avocation as long as he is possessed of patience and endurance. But patience and endurance are very essential qualifications for an apostle; and if we study the picture as Christ has so realistically drawn it in this parable, we can readily see that among the ordinary occupations in which one may engage there is perhaps none that develops so many excellent traits of mind and heart as those that are developed in the arduous life of the fisherman. The fisherman plies his trade on the sea; his toil, though at times fascinating, is exceedingly tedious and often disappointing. He sets out in the dusk of evening when the mists are gathering on the horizon, and from cape and headland the night winds rise to thwart, as it were, the hope of his success. Nevertheless, out he goes to fish, casting his net into the deep, rowing his monotonous way through the weary hours of a long and cheerless night, often through drenching rain and pitiless wind; and while his strong hands grasp the long, rough oars, his eyes are on the currents of the tides.

A net cast into the sea. Now, if we glance at the net, before the fisherman sets out for his catch, as it is piled up into what looks like a tangled mass of loosely twisted

threads thrown carelessly upon the shore, we marvel at its apparent unfitness for the purpose of fishing. But we do not get the idea of the net while it is lying in its shapeless bulk; the fact is, it was never made for the shore; its whole design is for the sea. There, and there only, its remarkable adaptability and the particular purpose of its naïve contrivance become apparent, because there it is, so to speak, in its own native element; and there, too, where it can spread itself out undisturbed amidst the changing tides and unexpected currents that are constantly passing through it, everything conspires to make its efficiency manifest. While we look down into the deep where the net is cast, its thin threads hardly perceptible, but ever in motion; yielding before every swell of the tide, yet never losing its identity, we are given a unique comparison of Christ's kingdom—His Church here on earth. To all appearances, this spiritual kingdom is no stronger than the meshes of a net, but let pressure be brought to bear against it, as it has been time and again in her eventful history; and we find that it is so constructed as to offer the most unyielding resistance to the mightiest forces of the world, and still continues to bear its freight onward and heavenward.

While the net is being let down into the sea, let us watch its marvelous adaptability to the elements for which its texture was fashioned. It is ever in motion with the waters in which it moves; it does not resist the swell of the tide, nor lose its form in the deep trough of the sea; it is so woven that there is no fear for its life against the pressure of such forces. Compared with the strength of the sea, the net is rather an object of weakness; but in this apparent weakness lies peculiar resistance—not, indeed, the resistance of the dreadnought, nor of

the concrete pier, which though seemingly impregnable, may be shelled and destroyed, but the baffling strength of elasticity and pliability which fits it to weather the worst storms amid the heaving tides, and enables it still to recover itself in the restless sea. Some giant leviathan, the last word in efficiency in naval construction, is steaming fast between two continents; a huge iceberg is also moving, not so fast, but slowly and surely from its arctic field in the North. With thundering impact and titanic shock they clash somewhere in the lanes of the sea, and death and destruction result. On the other hand, the pliable net cast into the deep offers no resistance to either wave or storm; it eludes their destructive force, lets them pass and soon recovers itself. In its apparent weakness lies its strength, the elastic strength of a net.

So it is with the Church of Christ, which is divine and so established that she can meet the sudden contingencies that may arise in the storms of life—those sudden upheavals which so often have compelled human institutions to give way before the mighty forces of popular revolt. What a fit symbol of the Church is this net cast into the sea! The apostles like expert fishermen trawl the drawnet of the Gospel through the troubled sea of the world; for the world is aptly compared to a sea—*that great sea, which stretcheth wide its arms; there are creeping things without number, creatures little and great* . . . . (Ps. 103:25-26).

The drawnet has another property which is typical of its mystic symbolism in regard to the Church. It contains the single thread that runs through the twisted strands which go to form the knitted meshes, each one inseparable from the other, and all uniting to make a perfect whole. So is the net of divine faith made up of

one and the same eternal truth; it, too, has many meshes but only a single thread, the one thread of divine authority which Christ gave to His apostles when He said: *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you* (John 20:21). Break one of the threads in the mesh of the fishing net, and you run the risk of disuniting the entire net when extra pressure is brought to bear against it. So also, should you deny one point of the doctrine of faith, the pressure of the force of logical sequence may compel you to doubt, if not deny, the whole system of divine revelation, for that same authority that vouches for belief in one article, has also vouched for all that God has revealed. You must be just as logical with divine faith as with mathematics. Admit one proposition and you have to admit all or reject all. The truths of faith are so closely connected, so consistently interwoven with one another, that to deny any one of them means logically to deny all the rest on which that one is based.

When the net with its catch has been drawn to shore, the assortment and rejection of its contents takes place. The fishermen sitting by the shore choose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. In the Book of Leviticus we read that the Jews were given very stringent injunctions in the Mosaic Law concerning the separation to be made when the trawling net brought the catch of fish to the shore. They were obliged to reject all fish that came under the heading of unclean. The Law commanded that *all that hath fins and scales, as well in the sea, as in the rivers, and the pools, you shall eat* (Lev. 11:9). The practice that obtains at the present day with the fishermen in the Sea of Galilee is to cast back into the lake that portion of the catch considered unclean or too small to have any market value. But the

CHRIST AND THE FISHERMEN

good fish, on the other hand, are thrown into baskets and other containers.

So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13: 49-50). "Terrible parable!" exclaims St. John Chrysostom. "More calculated to cause terror," adds St. Gregory the Great, "than to induce one to study it." "To hear that the wicked should be cast out," continues St. Chrysostom, "might lead you to think that the conclusion was not very important. Hence it is that the Son of God specifies precisely the nature of the consequences. It is the furnace of fire that awaits them, with its inconsolable weeping and its vain gnashing of teeth" (Homily XLVII in Matt. No. 2).

The Church which is the divine net of Christ is, indeed, solicitous that all should be taken into its meshes; but as with fishermen working on the high seas, some will always escape their net; hence, they have to take what comes, both bad and good, leaving to the shore hands the task of segregating the fish after the net is drawn to land. This could not be done so well while the net is in the water; wherefore, the worthless fish are retained therein with the rest that are good. The fishermen are satisfied to take whatever catch may happen to come along, realizing, of course, that many will not be worth the toil of their efforts; but, nevertheless, trusting that the net will inclose many fine specimens of good fish of excellent quality that will more than repay them for their arduous labors. So, too, must it be in the messianic kingdom while it lasts here on earth; it is only at the end, when time is no more and eternity has begun.

that the separation which is complete and final will take place.

When our divine Lord selected His first disciples to leave all and follow Him, He spoke to Peter and Andrew in words of more than ordinary import: *Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men* (Matt. 4:19). After heeding this divine invitation, no sooner had Peter taken his first draught of fishes than, throwing himself at his Master's feet, he exclaimed: *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* Jesus answered: *Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men* (Luke 5:8-10). But the apostles were not to remain on earth for long after Christ ascended into heaven: and yet the Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to *all nations . . . to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:19-20). Not for them only did He pray that they might be one, but *for them also who through their word shall believe in Me* (John 17:20). Under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost, the apostles taught and governed the faithful. To them was promised *the Spirit of Truth who shall abide with you* (John 14:17).

This same *Spirit of Truth* is still with the Church, because it must continue its divine mission to the end of time. For the past nineteen hundred years, Christ has remained in the bark of Peter, guiding and protecting her, always faithful to His promise: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:20). The bark of Peter has weathered many a severe storm since this divine assurance was guaranteed for her perpetuity, and after every new tempest Peter, at the helm, launches again into the deep to let down his net for a draught, taking in a great multitude of new fishes. The time most favorable for fishing is

always after a storm; and thus it has ever been in the history of the Catholic Church.

"Look back through the nineteen centuries of confusion and turmoil and change—and what do you find? In it and through it all we find one institution—and one alone—surviving and permanent amid every change and where everything else is changing. That one institution is the Church. Crushed, beaten, martyred, assailed by storms of fire and blood, buffeted by the ocean of human passion in which human works go down one after another, we see the Church ever rising up placid and renewed amid the ashes of fire and the deluge of blood, and turning quietly to pursue her work—going forth again and again upon her mission of peace and salvation, and again and again reconstructing society from the wrecks that lie scattered along the shores of time."

How true it is that God hath chosen the weak things to confound the strong and the foolish things to confound the wise! The kingdom of heaven is the threads of a net; but, in fact, strong enough to stand the most intense opposition to all the combined attacks of every phase of modern paganism. According to St. Augustine: "Every sinner is permitted to live either that he may be converted or that the just man may be exercised through him." Since the Church founded by Christ is the Church militant, it must necessarily follow that agencies for good and evil will play an active part either for or against her visible organization. Precisely because of this, she is the Church Militant, for she has to deal with Christians both good and bad in the Church until the end of the world.

Between the moral lesson of this parable and that of the tares or cockle there is a striking similarity. The

significant lesson in that parable was the attitude of toleration on the part of the owner of the field in permitting the cockle to grow together with the wheat. This attitude, however, on his part was more for the sake of the wheat which had to come to maturity than for the benefit of the cockle, the hindrances of the enemy to the contrary notwithstanding. Also, in this parable there was question of only two kinds of grain, good and bad, and the division was made from the external appearance of the wheat and the cockle. But in this parable of the fishing net there is no limit to the varieties, as it takes in all kinds; moreover, the division is made according to the specific quality of each particular fish of whatsoever kind it may happen to be.

But the parable has its application not only to the good and bad fishes that are caught in the net; it points also to those who refuse to be taken by the divinely appointed fishers of men. For if men could be saved without the Church just as well as within it, why then did Christ establish His Church? And if there are just as good fishes outside of the net to be chosen by the angels into vessels of divine election as well as those who have been good within it, for what purpose was the net cast into the sea? Just as fish outside of the net do not reach the shore, so, too, those who obstinately remain outside the true Church of Christ cannot be saved.

Again, just as in the parable of the wheat and the cockle, the reapers are the angels, so too is it here. God's angels, wards of His divine justice, are doing their appointed work watching the fishing net of the Church. It is their province to guard its contents until the catch is complete and full; for to them is committed the task of lifting that great net out of the troubled waters of

the sea of life, wherein vice and virtue are now so promiscuously confused, until the time when the net shall be trawled to the shores of eternity. With such expert guardians mistakes are impossible. All things are adjusted and weighed in the trial balance of the Eternal. The net is trawled and landed on the shore. The veil of time is lifted, and man finds himself according to the life he has lived in the great sea of the world, and neither more nor less.

Such is the kingdom of heaven here on earth. What more illuminating picture could be drawn by the master hand of our divine Lord when He says *it is like to a net cast into the sea . . . . which, when it was full, they drew out.*

"My nets shall sweep the seas of time,
And gather from the swirling flood,
From waters clear or brackish slime
The evil and the good;
And One shall make the reckoning vast
Where some are prized and some outcast."

CHAPTER IX

At the End of the Day

Vineyards frequently mentioned in Holy Scripture. The custom of dividing time among the Jews. The significance of the penny given for hire. Discontent among the laborers. The householder's logical expostulation. The necessity of personal co-operation for efficiency in regard to grace. Example from the Book of Wisdom. The call to salvation not identified with salvation itself. The distribution of divine gifts not uniform. A World's Fair. St. Paul's last letter to Timothy.

THE more we study the divine parables and allegories of the Gospel the more we become impressed with our Lord's judicious choice of nature's telling illustrations for throwing light on His spiritual doctrine. Nothing seems to escape His keen observation. It may be the common sparrow chirping on the housetop, the eagle soaring by some beetling cliff, the raven watching the scattered seed, the wily serpent, or the simple dove. In the present allegory He selects a vineyard where extensive preparations are on foot for the ruby treasure of the autumn's vintage.

The Bible speaks in more than one hundred places of the cultivation of vineyards; there is scarcely any other pursuit which is so often mentioned as the basis of allegories and parables. The vineyard as an object lesson of God's solicitude for man's welfare is found twice in the New Testament. In both illustrations the owner of the vineyard holds a conspicuous place; and the vineyard denotes that special place which the Jews held in God's plan of salvation, though the object and the attendant circumstances in both are different. In the first parable the workers are ordinary day laborers (Matt.

20:1-16); in the second they are tenants (Matt. 21:33-41). At present we are dealing with the vineyard and the workmen who were employed for their day's toil, not with the vineyard where the workmen were classed as tenants. The personal details of this allegory are very well chosen to illustrate the force of our Lord's teaching concerning our co-operation with grace as a means altogether indispensable for the obtaining of our eternal salvation.

First we observe how our Lord takes advantage of the season. Spring had come. Activity was at its height in the fields, gardens, and vineyards of Palestine. At this particular season, it was customary for the day laborers to betake themselves every morning to the market places, corresponding to our modern employment offices, where they were engaged for a day's work, as was the practice in the East. From these circumstances Christ builds up the instructive lesson of the present allegory.

Whenever the expression "kingdom of heaven" is found in the New Testament and is used by way of comparison with a person or thing, as we now have it in this illustration, it signifies the Church as founded on earth by Christ. The householder is God, the steward is Christ, the vineyard is the Church, the laborers are mankind without exception. The day stands for the duration of one's lifetime, as also for that of the human race. The hours of the day prefigure different periods of human life, e. g., childhood, youth, early manhood, mature years, and decrepit age. The evening is the end of life, and also the end of time. The market place is the world where men outside the Church stand idle; and the penny, the hire of the laborers, is life eternal, heaven.

Among the Jews the custom of dividing time was that which obtained among the ancients, and did not vary in the time of our Lord; they divided the entire day of twenty-four hours into eight watches. The night from sunset to sunrise was divided into four, named accordingly from the time at which they ended—the evening, the midnight, the cock-crow, the morning. The same division was made for the longer intervals of the day; and, like the night watches, took their names from the time at which they terminated. They were named respectively, the third hour, comprising the interval from sunrise to the middle period between that and midday; the sixth hour, extending from the third hour to midday; the ninth hour, from midday to the middle period between that and sunset; and the twelfth hour, from the ninth hour to sunset or evening. The dawn mentioned in the parable was the close of the fourth or morning watch of the night, which would correspond to our morning hour of six o'clock. It was then that the day's work began in the East, when the laborers were hired in the market place for the day's toil in the vineyards.

We are informed in the allegory that the householder went out very early in the morning, at the break of day, to hire laborers, all he could find.* This householder

* Morier in his *Second Journey through Persia,* p. 265, mentions having noticed in the market place at Hamadan a custom like that alluded to in the parable: "Here we observed every morning before the sun rose, that a numerous band of peasants were collected with spades in their hands, waiting to be hired for the day to work in the surrounding fields. This custom struck me as a most happy illustration of our Savior's parable, particularly when, passing by the same place late in the day, we still found others standing idle, and remembered His words, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' as most applicable to their situation; for on putting the very same question to them, they answered us, 'Because no man hath hired us.'"

was evidently one of those wealthy landowners who employed many hands in the rush season of spring for the culture of the vines. The working-day was usually from sunrise to sunset, as still is the time-honored custom in the East. It is also worth noting that the wages now allotted for a day's work in that country are about the same as they were in the time of our Lord.

Since the work that must be done in a vineyard during the spring and vintage seasons crowds, so to speak, all at once, like that of the harvest fields in the autumn, we can understand the action of the householder going out again to the market place in search of more laborers. *And going out about the third hour,* (nine o'clock) *he saw others,* evidently newcomers, *standing in the market place idle, and he said to them: Go you also into My vineyard* (Matt. 20:3-4). With these latter he made no agreement. They simply went to work with the implicit understanding that they would be justly recompensed for their services. Then, not altogether satisfied that the number of hands already engaged were quite sufficient to complete the work to be done in his vineyard, the householder went out again at the sixth and the ninth hour, at noon and at three o'clock, to reinforce the toilers, to meet the pressing demands for further help; and at the eleventh hour, one hour before sunset (five o'clock), he made the last attempt, in going to the market place, to make sure that every attention would be given to the culture of the vines in due season. Each time he went he found men waiting, with evidently nothing to do, and asked them: *Why stand you here all day idle?* (Matt. 20:6). They had indeed the will to work, but not until the householder came did the opportunity of being hired present itself: hence, they said: *Because no man hath hired*

us. He sent them also into his vineyard without making, however, any fixed stipulation about wages.

These last coming at the eleventh hour (five o'clock), did not have long to work, when time was called by the householder for the steward to pay the laborers their hire. The master of the vineyard had instructed the steward to pay all the laborers alike, the accustomed hire, a denarius,* and to begin payment with the last arrivals who entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour. This unexpected method of equal recompense to all the laborers and apparent disregard of the longer or shorter hours of their respective toil, causes murmuring and discontent among those who had gone to work in the early morning. Hence, they expostulating said: *These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heats* (Matt. 20:12). Judging now from a natural standpoint, and especially in the light of those reasons advanced against the equal distribution of the recompense—some working for long hours under the burning heat of midday; others standing all the day idle and toiling but one hour in the cool of the evening, their complaint, *you have made them equal to us,* does not seem altogether unreasonable. Our natural sense of the fitness of things tells us that the wage should be in proportion to the value of the work done; and Holy Writ seems to agree with this when it says: *God will render to everyone according to his works* (Prov. 24-29).

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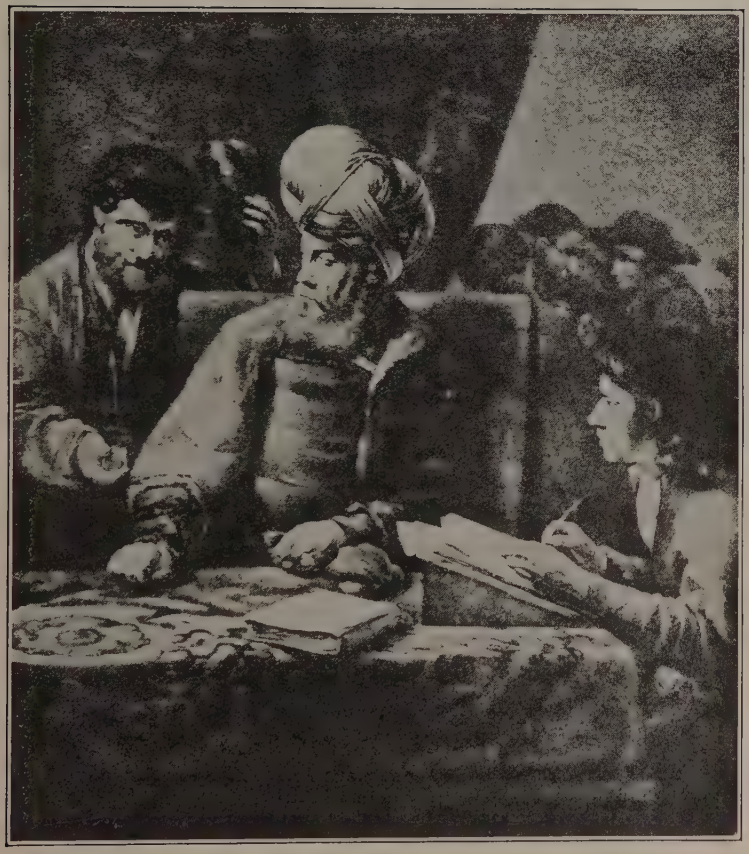
* The penny was the Roman silver denarius equivalent in value to about eighteen cents of our American coinage. It was the ordinary day's wage of a laborer in Palestine; and when we consider the times and the purchasing value of the denarius, much more than now, it was reckoned to be a just and fair wage for common labor.

The householder, rather logically and justly, too, settled the question of complaint on the part of the discontents, by giving them to understand that his decision was based not merely on the amount of work done nor on the length of time in doing it; but solely on an act of his own free will in fulfilling the agreement between himself and them without any prejudice to his justice. And he answering said to one of them, probably the leader of the opposition: *Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way; I will also give to this last even as to thee* (Matt. 20:13-14). In a word, I am free to do as I will with what belongs to me; and it is not for you to look with jealous eye on the good that I have done to others.

Now the householder draws a conclusion apparently paradoxical; but, better than any other explanation, it gives the true reason of the equal recompense notwithstanding the apparent disparity of merit due to longer or shorter hours of labor. *So shall the last be first and the first last* (vs. 16). These words indicate a great truth, one of those mysterious, anxious queries, easy enough to think but rather difficult to comprehend; for it belongs to God's providence to call whom He wills, and to give the measure of grace in due time and circumstance as He wills and to whom He wills. If we are a bit reflective, it is not so difficult to see how easily it can happen that many who were called last will be first in the kingdom of heaven, while those called first will be last.

This is what made St. John Chrysostom exclaim: "What can be the meaning of this parable?" And it is here that we also should agree with him that, having once determined the purpose of the allegory, we must not seek, with untimely curiosity, to discover the mean-



THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD PAYING HIS LABORERS

ing of every detail. When we ponder upon the underlying scope of the parable, which is intended principally to illustrate God's free will in disposing of His gifts as He lists, and likewise man's free choice in co-operating with them according to the measure of grace proportioned to each one's capacity, we can readily see that God's decisions are not based on human estimates. We understand likewise that the determining factor which must decide the degree of a greater or lesser recompense is not the external magnitude of the work, nor the longer time spent in its operation, but rather the free bestowal of the supernatural gifts of grace conferred, together with that correspondence on the part of the recipient, through whose faithful co-operation the interior grace given him is rendered efficacious.

If we are at all observant, we can note how a business man of the world adopts certain methods of remunerating his employees which to those unacquainted with his plans may seem unjust; likewise we can see no difficulty with regard to the equalization of the award made by the householder in the allegory. And for that matter have we not often heard an employer remark that one man can do as much or even more work in half the time than another? Some men are qualified for greater efficiency than others in less time and in the very same line of work. Now while the details of the allegory say nothing expressly as to the reason for giving the same reward to all, we are justified in making comparisons with what is done round about us by shrewd men of the world in dealing with their employees; and thus the attitude of the master of the vineyard toward the latecomers is emphasized in the present allegory. So it is in the spiritual order. Many will be able to gain in a

comparatively short period as much merit as it took others long years to acquire, just because they were capable of receiving the endowment of grace in a higher degree, and co-operated with it in a comparatively shorter time. Our divine Lord says: *In my Father's house there are many mansions* (John 14:2). The Fathers of the Church are unanimous in holding that these words mean different degrees of participation in the happiness of life eternal. St. Thomas teaches: The uniform value of the penny represents the uniformity of the happiness of heaven considered with regard to its object, but the diversity of places in heaven signifies the difference in the happiness considered with regard to the degree in which it is possessed.

Our divine Lord, therefore, teaches us in the allegory of the laborers in the vineyard that in heaven the same reward has been justly given to those whose merits here were equal, even though their claims for recompense were, according to human standards, very different in duration as in the other conditions in which their works were accomplished. For this same reason the Holy Ghost makes us acquainted in Holy Writ with that blessed recipient of an extraordinary measure of efficacious grace which enabled him in a short space to fulfil a long time. *Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time; for his soul pleased God. Therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities. But the people see this and understand not, nor lay up such things in their hearts; that the grace of God and His mercy is with His saints, and that He hath respect to His chosen* (Wisd. 4:13-15).

The allegory closes with the words: *For many are called, but few are chosen* (Matt. 20:16). These terrifying

words, which seem to us to stand alone among the mild and gentle doctrines of the Gospel, do not, in the scope of the parable, carry with them that awful sense of dread almost bordering on despair, of which some preachers like to make capital in drawing conclusions altogether unwarranted concerning the number of the saved and the lost. Such zeal is not in keeping with *knowledge.* Neither is there any warrant in the teaching of the Church for holding such an unsound opinion as to the scope of the present allegory; and it is certainly far beyond the province of anyone, barring a divine inspiration, to make bold to determine the greater or less balance in which shall be found the number of the elect.

Many are called means that *all* are called since *many* means *all* in the original Greek. The *many* are called to the ordinary endowment of grace with which they must co-operate to make that call efficacious for the kingdom of heaven. *Wherefore,* St. Peter says, . . . *labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election* (II Peter 1:10); but not all are chosen to receive that extraordinary measure of grace by the aid of which heroic virtue is practiced and eminent sanctity attained. These are comparatively the few; and the process which the Church employs in the canonization of her saints is a striking evidence of an actual fact that only the few, in comparison with the many, are really chosen for signal distinction in the service of Christ's kingdom.

"Lord," says St. Augustine, "Thou deignest to equalize the wages of life, but not the splendor of eternal glory. The same penny is given to all; for all the saints shall reign with Thee throughout eternity, but not all in the same splendor. It is common to all the stars to shine

continually in the heavens, but they have not all the same brilliancy."

In this kingdom Christ is the absolute master of all His gifts and all His subjects. He says in the person of the householder: *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will?* (Matt. 20:15). He deals with souls not as a class in a multitude, but individually, one by one, being just and considerate to each, demanding of no man more than He has put in his power to give (Luke 12:40). But He does not give equal gifts to all; like a skillful architect He does not elaborate all parts of his building alike. *To every one of us,* says St. Paul, *is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ . . . And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:7, 11-13).

In Holy Writ God promised to give His grace to all, a fact which is truly typified by the householder hiring laborers in the market place, and who is so to speak pressing them into His service for the splendid reward held out to them. His will, conditional of course, is that *all men should be saved;* and just because of this divine will is actual grace given freely as a gift to all. But regarding the various circumstances in which God bestows this grace—the time, the kind, the measure—all this is purely a matter of His free choice and man's co-operation, and no one with any concept of the infinite wisdom of God and his own ignorance will dare to question the ways of His divine providence.

He has indeed given the most unqualified proof of His loving condescension by going out at early morning into the public market place of the world; and then by going out again and again up to the very last hour of man's workable life, calling him to His service. If He calls at the precise hour that pleases Him, who has the right to say "Nay" to His doing so? He called the Jews first; then He called the Gentiles. He called Peter and Andrew and the rest of the apostles in the first days of His ministry. Later He called Paul of Tarsus, later still Cornelius and Timothy and Dionysius were called. One He calls in infancy, another in boyhood, a third in manhood, others in declining years, while there are yet others who heed the invitation only on the bed of illness, or even shortly before the last gasp of the breath of life. To some He has given five talents, to others just two, and there are certain others who are given only one. He gives to each in different measure according to His own design.

The distribution of His gifts is not uniform, but varied, and often marked off by striking contrasts; but to all He gives that special gift called *gratia sufficiens,* which is absolutely necessary for personal sanctification, requiring, however, the co-operation of the recipient to attain his final justification. Wherefore we see that, while all the laborers in the vineyard were awarded the same prize, yet not all partook of the award according to the same measure of time. The manner of participating in the reward of life eternal will also be proportioned to the individual merits of the participants when evening is come, when the great work of each one's life is done; which participation, according to all the Fathers of the Church, means nothing else than the possession of God for all eternity.

Some years ago hundreds of thousands visited the great World's Fair held in San Francisco. After they passed by the stately tower of jewels, joy and satisfaction seemed to depict outwardly the inner feelings of those who witnessed that marvelous array of glittering wonder. Days and weeks and months were spent taking in the grand exhibition of the world's best genius; but how comparatively few of those daily thousands passing through the gates were at all capable of enjoying to the utmost, much less of comprehending, the inventive, constructive power in what the hand of man had so ingeniously set before them! All left the exhibition grounds more than satisfied, but it was nothing short of amusing to note how seemingly varied was the degree in which the satisfaction had been realized. Something akin to this may be our experience when we pass through the gates of heaven; though it is not for us now to anticipate how we are to enjoy the rich award of our daily round of toil, till the evening of life is come, when the divine Householder calls the steward to pay the laborers their hire.

There is more wisdom in weighing deeply and well what St. Paul wrote to his devoted Timothy when he was preparing for martyrdom in the Mamertine prison at Rome: *The time of my dissolution is at hand: I have fought the good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me on that day, and not only to me but to them also that love His coming* (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Such, too, must have been the thought of the illustrious Cardinal Newman when he penned his immortal lines: "May He support us all the day long, till the

shades lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done! Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging and a holy rest, and peace at last."

"Into Thy vineyard I come in haste,
Eleven sounds from its ancient tower;
So many years have gone to waste,
What can I do in a single hour?"

CHAPTER X

The Prayer That Availeth

Two classes of publicans. Tax system in the Roman Empire. Christ's object in the parable. The two extremes of Jewish society. Prayer reveals the inner man. Jacob's power in prayer. The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Magnificat. Prayer of the Pharisee and the publican. Commentary of SS. Ambrose and Augustine. Christ's keen analysis of the Pharisee and publican. He condemns the hypocrisy of the one and lauds the humility of the other. The seven daughters of pride. Difference between vanity and vainglory.

ACCORDING to many commentators this parable is a true history of the two men who figured as its active principals. Its special purpose in our Lord's mind was to bring before His own disciples the abomination in which He held the vice of pride, and the esteem with which He regarded the virtue of humility, and especially humility in time of prayer. It is probably one of the most generally well known of all the parables, and is frequently used in the ordinary commonplaces of daily life for denouncing conceit and extolling sincerity. It was spoken by our Lord in the third year of His sacred ministry, about six months before the end.

For a better understanding of the disdainful attitude of the Pharisee towards the man who entered the Temple for the same purpose as he himself, it will help to know in what light the publicans were considered by the Jews in general. There were two classes of publicans. One had wealth; the other had not. The wealthy publicans were mostly foreigners who made their riches by collecting the taxes in the conquered provinces of the Roman Empire. It was a Roman custom, after a country had

been subjugated, for the officials of the Empire to farm the taxes and customs to capitalists who undertook to pay a certain sum annually into the Roman treasury. The capitalists in turn sublet the tax revenues to men who traveled up and down the country, and who were paid on a commission basis. These were usually needy Jews and they were called publicans, also.*

It is easy to see how the life of the publicans was frowned upon, for to the Jewish mind it was an outrage that the chosen people of God had to pay tribute to the Romans; and, moreover, it was like adding insult to injury to be forced to pay taxes to a foreigner through the exactions of their own countrymen. Hence the publicans had lost all caste with the Jews, not alone on account of their position, but likewise owing to their unsavory reputation for dishonesty because of the crooked methods which they employed in forcing the payment of taxes. Besides, they were the subordinate agents of the publicans proper, and were mostly natives of the place where they were stationed. Their duties in general were considered odious: they had to superintend the imports

* The publicans, or tax-gatherers, were a class held in the greatest disrepute among the Jews. This arose partly from the fact that they were the representatives of a foreign, heathen power, partly from their rapacity and oppressive and vexatious practices. Those who, like Matthew, sat at the receipt of custom incurred special obloquy. Their illegal exactions and the ruthless way in which they insisted on examining every package of merchandise introduced into a town, thus necessitating the unloading of the beasts of burden, and the unpacking and repacking of the goods, caused them to be detested by all who had to submit to such an embarrassing process. Their money chest was held in particular abhorrence: no alms might be taken out of it, nor might its contents be used for the purposes of exchange, while they themselves were regarded as excluded from the religious fellowship of Israel, and under a disability of appearing as witnesses in the national courts. No wonder, then, that we find them classed with harlots and sinners, with highwaymen and murderers. (Coghlan, C. P.)

and exports, determine their value, and enforce the payment of the tax assessments.

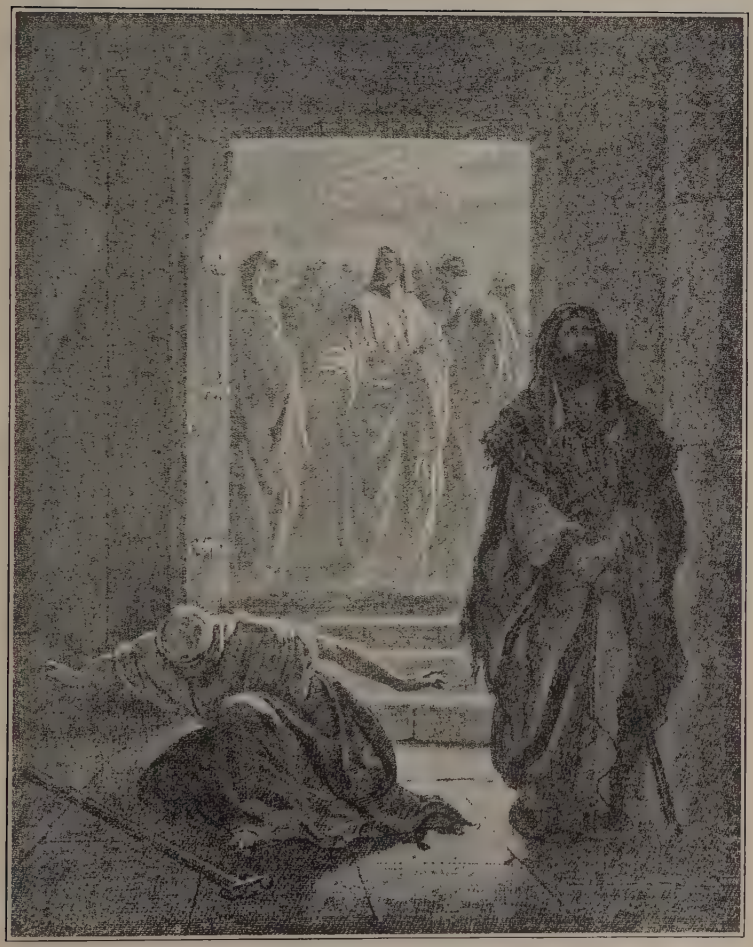
Our divine Lord had a very special object in the instructive lesson to be derived from this parable, for the Gospel tells us that it was addressed to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others (Luke 18:9); consequently, He selected outstanding types which would be readily understood by those for whom the pointed moral was intended. The Pharisees were esteemed among the influential classes; they ranked themselves as just men in Israel; the publicans, on the contrary, were in all eyes the embodiment of dislike. Our Lord Himself had on a certain occasion taken notice of their general discredit when He included the publicans in the class of least desirable characters: *Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you* (Matt. 21:31).

Two men, said Jesus, *went up into the Temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a publican* (Luke 18: 10). The comparison is decidedly marked from the outset. Between the two men there seemed to be only one thing in common: *they went to pray.* In all else they were the personification of the two extremes of Jewish society in the house of God; the one with his pharisaic justice, his punctilious exactness, his ostentatious regard for the Law; the other with his sin-laden soul, his despised profession, his acknowledged, utter unworthiness to darken the threshold of the Temple. The one is accustomed to address God in prayer in a manner that has almost been reduced to a science. The other is more familiar with the vocabulary of sinners.

We naturally desire to know why our Lord depicts the character of these two men in an attitude of prayer in

the Temple. He certainly wished to instruct us what to imitate in the one and what to abhor in the other. Surely the Pharisee and the publican had ample opportunities to meet on other occasions and in other places more frequently than at prayer in the Temple; hence, it is by no means accidental that our Lord has selected the time and place for our spiritual instruction regarding these types of two distinctly outstanding classes of men. Indeed, if there be any place where a man ought to be his real self, it should be in the Temple where he prays alone before his God. Neither diplomacy nor politics are credentials in God's house, and if one is not his true self in so sacred a place, he rarely will be anywhere.

In the public life of the Patriarch Jacob we find no solution as to how one so weak could have such power as to be styled "a man who had power with God" (Gen. 32: 24, 28-31); but when we penetrate into that inner life of his house of prayer and there behold the man in the full powers of his soul, his apparent weakness becomes the inverse coefficient of his spiritual strength, and we understand the mighty results of which he was so remarkably capable. In the case of David, too, whose otherwise saintly life was marred by such grave falls, we are inclined to wonder how God could speak so favorably of a king who so shamefully stained the ermine of his royal purple. The fact is that we seldom know a man thoroughly from the mere records of history; they give us, as a rule, only one side of his personality, and that often is the seamy side. But when we read the Psalms of King David and there behold the revelations of his inner life, in the very interior of his soul, we get to know the man as he is before God. History depicts him in his fall and degradation; the Psalter reveals his true character, the



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

interior man of prayer, to the very depths of his saintly, penitential spirit. Must we not speak likewise of her whom all generations love to call blessed? Do we not learn more about her marvelous hidden life with God from that lay of heaven's inspiration, the Magnificat, than we can know of her in any other way? This little digression may help us to understand why our Lord selected the Temple and the time of prayer that we might see into the spiritual depths of what is good and evil in both Pharisee and publican as they stand in the presence of Him who knows them better than they know themselves.

The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: *O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; as is also this publican* (Luke 18:11). It is not the attitude of standing, but the ostentatious pose in which he planted himself that betrayed his inward pride, for the Jews prayed sometimes in the standing position. *And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the sight of the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven* (III Kings 8:22). The Pharisee commenced his prayer well by thanking God; however, he does not proceed very far before he throws the mask aside, directing to himself the praise of glory which belongs to God alone. He attributes whatever merit he has acquired in keeping the law to his own assumed righteousness rather than to any supernatural influences external to himself. No mention whatever is made of his sins, past or present; he remembers only his virtues, his exactitude in keeping the requirements of the Law. Instead of observing merely the annual fast on the Day of Atonement, he fasts twice in the week; he gives tithes of everything, not only of the general income which the Law prescribed, but he goes

on to works of supererogation by tithing everything in his possession. "Self-satisfaction," says St. John Chrysostom, "takes, with him, the form of thanksgiving. But the best thanksgiving consists in confessing our sins and acknowledging ourselves worthy of punishment." This man really needs nothing. He merely wishes to let God know what a good man he is. But he does not stop here. In his own eyes he not merely outclasses all the rest of men, but he proceeds to pronounce condemnation against their vices. Dividing mankind into two classes, he puts himself in the first, and relegates all others into the despised and sinful motley herd of humanity. They are extortioners, unjust, adulterers.*

Looking round about in the Temple, probably to watch for the effect of his self-laudation, his glance fell upon the poor sinner in the attitude of prayer and penance at the rear of the Temple. The publican did not so much as dare lift up his eyes to heaven; his unworthiness to be sheltered under the Temple roof was too great for him to know aught else but his sinful soul, and so the only thoughts crowding in upon his mind were: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner* (Luke 18:13). While the publican was striking his breast in the attitude of contrite

* We have many decisive proofs of the rigor of the Pharisees with regard to the Mosaic Law, even anterior to the time of Christ. When Judas Machabeus entered into an alliance with the Romans, an alliance forbidden indeed by the Law but necessary because of the straitened condition in which the nation then was, he was bitterly upbraided by the sect of the Pharisees. If, then, they did this in circumstances so trying and against a hero so brave, and a champion of his country and religion so glorious as Judas Machabeus, it will be easy to form an idea of their inflexible spirit. But this sect, whom we may call the Jewish Intransigents, rendered very great service to religion and to their country, and they preserved both the one and the other in the midst of the severest trials. (Cf. Cardinal Meignan, *The Machabees*. See also Bonomelli-Byrne, v. 3, p. 296.)

sorrow, the Pharisee at once pronounced his condemnation, naming the publican in his previous list of extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is the publican (vs. 11). "The Hindoo Brahmin had not greater contempt for the Pariah," remarks Trench, "than this Pharisee had for the publican."

The Pharisee proclaims himself just and righteous. *And yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred* (Eccles. 9:1). "He had," says St. Ambrose, "taken great trouble to avoid committing theft and adultery—in order that he might not resemble the publican—to fast and pay tithes of all that he earned . . . . But the devil had a share in this justice, and helped him to ascend, that he might fall from the greater height and to greater depths." Likewise he condemns all the rest as unjust, he himself going against the divine ordinance: *Judge not that you may not be judged* (Matt. 7:1). There was not only the sin of rash judgment in attributing to the publican sins of which he may not have been guilty, but there was besides that complete lack of charity for his neighbor in the use of the contemptuous expression "this publican." The fact that this man has nothing to be sorry for, and that his mentality can find only praise for himself with contempt for all others, is in itself a true indication of the low standard of his spirituality.

Well did St. Augustine remark: "Wast thou come to pray or to praise thyself? Thou saidst that thou hadst all, thou soughtest as one that needed nought. How then didst thou come to pray?" (Serm. CCXC). "It is not enough to pray to God, he must praise himself, and moreover insult him who prays" (Serm. CXV, 6). Once more: "The Pharisee rejoices less in his own health than in the comparison of it with the diseases of others. It would

have been more salutary for him, since he had come to the Physician, to show by confession where he was ill rather than to dissemble as to his wounds, and to dare to triumph over the scars of another. It was no wonder, therefore, if the publican, who was not ashamed to show what he deplored, went away cured rather than he" (Ennar, 2 Ps. XXXI; 2, Serm. CCCII, 1).

And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner* (Luke 18:13). In this penitential attitude accompanied with a few brief words we have all the requisites for a perfect prayer. Prayer is the lifting up of man's heart to God in humble petition for the graces of which he stands most in need. The publican feels the need of reconciliation with God; therefore he beseeches His divine mercy before aught else. There is no hint whatever as to anything worthwhile in his life; in fact, he knows of nothing that is so; but he realizes that he is a sinful man, and thus he declares in humility and truth that he is a sinner. His soul is occupied with the overwhelming thought of the injury he must have caused in the past; hence he makes no reference whatever to what other men may have done amiss; his heart is taken up with the one desire of being again the friend of his God through forgiveness.

On the part of the publican his outward demonstration was a certain revelation of what was taking place within his soul. He struck his breast in true contrition, realizing the awful debt of sin that oppressed his grief-stricken conscience. How true are the words of Holy Writ: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds* (Eccles. 35:21). This simple, sincere prayer met with its own reward. It was the sigh of his heart,

yet it was heard, for we have our Lord's assuring words: *I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other: because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 18:14).

"The publican stood far off, and replied not to the insolent abuse. He did not say, as many a one would have said: 'How darest thou meddle with my life, or blame my actions? Am I not better than thou art? I will unmask thy evil doings so that thou wilt not dare ever again to enter these sacred precincts.' Not one of these uncharitable words did he say, which many of us so lightly use in daily life in our disputes with one another. Rather did he strike his breast with bitter sighs, and say: 'Be merciful to me, a sinner.' And he went forth justified. Seest thou how quickly? He bore the abuse, and was cleansed from the shame. He suffered himself to be reproached with his sins, and he was purified from his sins. The accusation of guilt became his discharge from guilt, and his enemy involuntarily became his benefactor. How long would the publican have been obliged to labor in fasting, in lying upon a hard bed, in vigils, in distributing his goods amongst the poor, in long penance in sackcloth and ashes, to obtain pardon for his many sins; yet he casts off all guilt simply by one word without having done any of all these things. The abuse and reproaches of him who exalted himself exceedingly above him brought him the crown of righteousness, and indeed, without sweat, without trouble, and without long waiting. Seest thou how we, even when we are reproached for real faults of which we ourselves are conscious, may soon obtain pardon for all our sins if we do not answer our accuser with offensive words, but rather

with bitter sighs beg pardon of God for all our faults?" (M. 54:700, *et seq.*).

It does not take the spiritual discernment of an expert to catch the clear, precise meaning of this parable. There was no misgiving as to what Christ meant in the simple portrayal of the two men; for, notwithstanding the fact that the publican was despised by the people in general, and the Pharisee rated as the élite of Jewish society in particular, nevertheless, the analysis of the two characters was so searching and incisive that the contrast between the proud self-exaltation of the Pharisee and the contrite self-abasement of the publican, left no choice but a verdict of condemnation for pride and of praise for humility.

In truth it may be said that the virtue of humility hitherto in the background was now prominently brought to the front through this instructive object lesson of Christ. No doubt it was said in the Ancient Covenant that God *shall scorn the scorners and to the meek He will give grace* (Prov. 3:34); but it required the sublime example of Christ Himself to make us realize what that passage really meant. We needed His precept: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. 11:29), and, above all, the force of His divine example when, in the language of St. Paul, He *emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil. 2:7). Prior to His coming the soil of Palestine was ill-prepared for the culture of a virtue which, like the violet, thrives best where its fragrance is felt, while its life is hidden in the obscurity of the shade. Thus it was with Christ Himself, whose marvelous life was practically one of obscurity in the hidden life at Nazareth. Hence He extols the virtue of the publican in seeking a place in the Temple where he could

communicate with God through humble prayer without in the least attracting any notoriety to himself and much less personal attention to what he was doing.

Our divine Lord in this parable had undoubtedly the lesson of humility in view for each one of us as the necessary foundation for our personal sanctification; wherefore He puts us on our guard against the disease of pharisaism which is so often in evidence through the vainglory that, like a cankerworm, eats into our best actions. Spiritual writers tell us that pride has seven daughters, the oldest of which is vainglory; then comes boasting, ambition, presumption, hypocrisy, stubbornness, and contempt of others. All of these vices come from one root and belong to the first degree in the family tree.

We may say, in passing, that vanity and vainglory are not the same. Vanity is emptiness. In Athens a vain fellow was called "porous," or "hollow." In Rome he was called "empty." Hence in the Roman and Greek world vanity was synonymous with emptiness, because it could be vainglorious about nothing; whereas vainglory took complacency in the contemplation of its own excellence. It was called vainglory not from the absence of material, but from the folly of self-contemplation of its own excellence, which takes from God the honor due to Him alone. All other sins and vices are multiplied by doing what is evil; vainglory alone is nourished by doing what is good.

The difference, then, between vanity and pride is self-evident. A vain person is blind to his own incapacity, he is wise in his own conceits. Where vanity makes for folly, pride makes for havoc. Vanity can be laughed at with impunity, but pride must be constantly feared and

when sensitively aroused is wrathfully vindictive. By pride angels fell, and through it no man can hope to rise.

"With what delight, great God! I trace
The acts of Thy stupendous grace!
To count them were to count the sand
That lies upon the sea-beat strand."

CHAPTER XI

A Stony Heart

The time of the parable. Erroneous opinion of the rabbinical school of Jewry. Peter's question to Christ. The parabolic rule of interpretation. High point of the parable. God's first introduction as a King. The servant not an ordinary menial. Practice of dealing with debtors in the ancient code. The servant before the King—his supplication. The enormous debt of the servant—he is forgiven. Ungrateful attitude of the servant towards his fellow servant. Measure for measure. Justice without mercy to him who shows no mercy. Example from the annals of the Church.

THE two opposite poles of the earth determine the limits of the visible world. One extremity necessarily calls for the other. In the study of the present parable, which is designated as the Unmerciful Servant, we are introduced to one of God's greatest attributes, His boundless mercy. As in the study of the universe where one extreme calls for another, so, too, the principle holds here in the invisible world of grace. The consoling attribute of mercy calls for its corresponding extreme of God's inexorable justice. But as the poles of the earth are only relatively opposite, since they are both essential to its existence, likewise, in our study of this parable we can readily see that mercy and justice are not opposed; but like correlative extremes they share a dual relation in which the existence of one must of necessity postulate that of the other.

The parable of the Unmerciful Servant was spoken by our divine Lord in the third year of His sacred ministry and not very long before His final journey to Jerusalem. The occasion that moved Him to portray the consoling

doctrine of the parable in which He threw such light on one of the most vexing problems of man's anxious concern came from the suggestive question of the Apostle Peter when he asked Him concerning the proper attitude towards an offending brother.

Through the erroneous teaching of the rabbinical schools an opinion was current among the Jews of the time that one who had done an injury should be pardoned three times and no more. The Apostle, remembering this Jewish custom of dealing with an enemy, wished to assure himself that he was not mistaken in adhering to the tradition. Judging, too, from our Lord's former condemnation of the principle of retaliation, and thinking perhaps that the new doctrine of his Master might be over-lenient, Peter approached Him, saying: *Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?* (Matt. 18:21). The number seven used in this connection by the Apostle was to remind Christ of His doctrine on a former occasion when He was instructing His disciples on the duty of fraternal charity. Then He had said: *If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him; and if he do penance, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted unto thee saying "I repent," forgive him* (Luke 17:3-4).

The Lord answered Peter: *I say not to thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven times* (Matt. 18:21-22). In his commentary St. Chrysostom remarks: "What then saith Christ, the good God, who is loving towards man? *I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven times,* setting not a number here but what is infinite, and perpetual, and forever. We are taught from the very outset, in the question put by the

Apostle and in its answer by our Lord, the duty of absolute and not limited forgiveness.

The circumstances which form the setting of this parable and which serve to express the high points in our Lord's teaching, are likely to jar on our feelings, since their details seem to go to the extreme and even beyond anything suggested by our conventional methods in the light of modern times. In the study of the parables, and particularly in the one now before us, we should keep in mind the general canon of parabolic interpretation which expressly lays down the necessity of distinguishing between that which is essential, as directly bearing on the object lesson, and that which is introduced merely as a setting for the sake of giving point to its principal feature. Besides remembering this rule of interpretation, it is likewise helpful to keep in mind that many of the circumstances that give point to the teaching of the parables are taken from life conditions where the customs that obtain in the lands of the East are strikingly different from those in practice with us. By keeping these essentials of parabolic teaching in view, and observing the accidentals merely to throw light on the high points of the lessons to be derived, we have in this parable three distinct scenes which admirably portray the great attribute of God's infinite mercy as associated with His strict justice.

This is the first time that God is introduced to us as a king. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king who would take an account of his servants* (Matt. 18:23). As soon as the king began to take the reckoning of his servants, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. In this figurative illustration the attitude of the earthly king towards his servants sets

forth the relationship that exists in our dealings with God our Creator. The servant brought to him owed an enormous sum of money. The talent* was valued by its weight in gold or silver, and it varied in value according to the monetary system of the country. In our coinage the Attic silver talent had a value of $1,200; the Jewish talent in silver would be over $1,800; and the same in gold was equivalent to $25,000. Since there is no way of ascertaining to which of these denominations our Lord referred, the ten thousand talents owed by the servant could range from $10,000,000 to $250,000,000.

The servants in the parable cannot be understood to mean ordinary slaves, since an Oriental king would not deal directly with menials; and neither is it at all probable that any ordinary servant could become involved to the extent of such an appalling financial obligation. The servant being in all probability one of the trusted officials of the royal household, was so hopelessly involved in debt that we can understand how reluctant he was to appear in the king's presence. Lacking the courage to face the judicial reckoning, he had to be brought before him.

The circumstances of the parable imply that the debt was real and admitted as such on the part of the servant. In the judicial investigation according to the Mosaic Law, and also in keeping with the universal procedure of antiquity, the "servant" found guilty was ordered to be sold with his entire family and all his property; and the returns were to be sent to the coffers of the royal treasury. In the Book of Exodus we read that insolvent

* According to commentators, when simply a talent is mentioned in Holy Writ, a gold, not a silver talent, is meant. It was not calculated by count, but by weight.

debtors should be sold (22:3). The same is found in Leviticus (25:39-47), and in the Fourth Book of Kings (4:1). Although the letter of the law imposed such severe punishment, it was mollified by a more humane spirit among the Jews; but among the nations of the East we are informed that the severe sentence was frequently carried into effect.

Since this debtor in the parable had no money wherewith to pay the debt, the king ordered that the sanction of the ancient law should have full force and the sentence be carried out. Nor is there anything in the parable to indicate whether the sum accruing from such a comprehensive sale of the bankrupt family would amount to the extent of the indebtedness. It was the only resource the king had left to recover even part of his revenues. It is indeed difficult for us to understand how a man's wife and family could be sold for the bankruptcy which perhaps was brought about by the neglect of just a solitary individual. Such, however, was the theoretical equity of the Roman code; and it is clearly stated in the Mosaic Law that an insolvent debtor was sold with his whole family.

The servant, realizing that his case was hopeless, as there was no way to turn for financial aid in his bankruptcy, fell upon his knees, bowed down before the king, and implored piteously for his mercy, saying: *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all* (Matt. 18:26). *And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt* (vs. 27). It would be hard indeed to find a more true-to-life picture representing man's actual condition towards his Creator than that which so graphically describes the scene in this parable, painted by the master hand of Christ Himself. Neither

can we find anything that better portrays God's loving condescension towards the individual sinner than the readiness with which the king so magnanimously displayed his royal generosity in granting a humble request apparently born of good will, a pleading for mercy with the promise to pay all, even though circumstances would hardly permit the fulfillment of such a pledge to liquidate the staggering amount during an entire lifetime.

But strange to say, and here indeed truth is very strange, our sensibilities are jarred through and through when we discover how short-lived was the gratitude of this bankrupt servant, so recently released from the obligation of his enormous debt. Human nature is sadly given to strange inconsistencies. Here quite another picture is set before us. Being freed from his appalling financial obligations, the pardoned servant retires from the presence of the king, no doubt expressing his gratitude in a most ostentatious manner after the custom of the Orientals. He was not gone very far when, as it were, accidentally he meets one of his fellow servants who owed him the trifling sum of one hundred pence. What happens? Now we have the sharp contrast that marks the conduct of this subordinate official, and which gives point to the whole setting of the striking parable. The small coin, the Roman denarius (penny), was the equivalent of about twenty cents in our present-day American coinage; whereas the talent in the debt of the other was the equivalent of at least about twelve hundred dollars.

No sooner did the forgiven servant meet his fellow servant than immediately, without giving him time for an interview, he throttled him, demanding: *Pay what thou owest* (Matt. 18:28). Pleading for mercy until such

time as circumstances would favor him in meeting the obligation of paying the debt, the man fell on his knees and begged, just as his assailant had done shortly before at the feet of his master, and he, too, promised to pay all. Here we should look for an expression of generous reciprocity towards this entreating fellow servant; yet the man who had been so liberally acquitted by the king is now the unrelenting creditor towards his debtor, and actually refuses even to have patience until such time as he can fulfill his promise to pay in full. Nay more, he inflicts a lifelong sentence, from which he himself had but very hardly escaped, and condemns his fellow servant to harsh and pitiless treatment. Although the words of the second debtor are almost identical with those in which the first debtor besought the king's patience, yet mercy is denied, and the servant is cast into prison till he has paid the entire debt.

Even though this happened between human individuals, yet human language is most inadequate to express the incongruity bordering on savagery which characterizes such unthinkable conduct. With telling retort St. John Chrysostom says the unmerciful servant "refused to recognize the port in which he himself only a short time before escaped shipwreck." His debt had been so great, ten thousand talents, and the other so small, one hundred pence! This signifies how little any man can offend against his brother, in comparison with how much every man has offended against his God: so that these offenses to those are as a drop of water to the boundless ocean.

But even here is seen the law of retribution. There is nothing so certain as the nemesis of evil. Little did the unmerciful servant realize how quickly even-handed justice

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

would be meted out, and that, too, in a measure to upset all his calculations; for was he not indeed the last even to suspect that with what measure he meted out to others, so assuredly would it be meted out to himself? Not always do the "mills of the gods grind slowly." Condign punishment with just retribution often immediately follows on the heels of heartless conduct.

Now his fellow servants seeing what was done were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done (Matt. 18:31). The servants saw through the injustice; they became grieved and their lord became angry; to them "grief," to him "anger" is ascribed. Then his lord called him and said to him: *Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me. Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?* (vss. 32-33). True indeed, he was not bound in strict justice to forgive the debt, but neither was he urged to do so. He was simply asked to have patience with his debtor; and since he himself a short time before was in a much worse condition of insolvency with regard to his own debts, so much so that he was to be sold with his entire household and then cast into prison, it might have been hoped that he would gladly imitate the example of his royal master and exercise at least his patience and forbearance if not his noble liberality. It is as if the king should say: "If you are unwilling to follow me in my liberality, you should at least have imitated me in mercy by acceding to your debtor's request for time."

To that just rebuke there was no reply. The attribute of mercy cannot be abused with impunity. The unmerciful servant was cast into prison and delivered to the torturers until he should have paid the whole of his debt.

Now comes the clear and obvious lesson to be spiritually drawn from the attitude of the principals who figure in the scene of the divine parable. The king had dealt with his servant previously as a creditor; now he assumed the rôle of a judge. The *lex talionis* will be enforced: *Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy* (Jos. 2:13).

Our divine Lord concludes the parable with a lesson which is necessary for all on account of its far-reaching consequences: *So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts* (Matt. 18:35). And in that most beautiful of all prayers, the only one taught us by Christ, it is clearly laid down that our forgiveness is always in proportion to the measure of mercy we are meting out to others. Thus therefore shall you pray: *Our Father, who art in heaven . . . . forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors* (Matt. 6:9). *For if you will forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses* (Matt. 6:15). God will treat us as we treat others, because He has practically delivered our fate into our own hands, since it will be what we make it. In the inspired pages of Holy Writ God is never wearied of telling us how He will safeguard us against evil according to the measure of our generosity in dealing with others. *Deal thy bread to the hungry and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh* (Isa. 58:7). And the same prophet assures us in still more encouraging words: *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall*

hear; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am (vss. 8, 9). It is evident, therefore, that our Lord takes as done to Himself whatsoever we do to the least of His brethren. There is danger in spiritual matters, unless we are on the alert, of losing the picture in the frame. We are all too prone to imagine that when we distribute our worldly goods we are but clothing and feeding the poor mendicants of our cities, and it is in this that we are mistaken. We are doing much more. We are actually clothing and feeding Jesus Christ Himself in the person of His poor. *He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord* (Prov. 19:17).

Nature is ever demanding retaliation. It is not natural to forgive an injury, but Christ does not ask us to forgive in the name of nature, but in the name of that higher law of grace and love which He Himself inculcated when He set the example of forgiving even His enemies who brought about His death by crucifixion. In this parable the master referred to the type which he himself had set for his servant by forgiving his entire debt; and in like manner does our divine Master, Christ, expect each one of us to look to Him as the model to imitate in the greatest of all virtues, Christian charity. Here indeed is verified the truth of His own words spoken at the Last Supper: *I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also* (John 13:15).

The more we study this parable, the more we realize that mercy and justice go together to portray the perfect law of charity. While the word "justice" seems to have a grating sound in our ears, yet we cannot but approve the sterling quality of that divine attribute when we see how necessary it is for the adjustment of right and wrong in daily life. It gives no jar to our feel-

ings to observe how the master meted out justice to the unmerciful servant for his inhuman cruelty; even the very instincts of our nature look for retributive justice when occasion demands. What we must beware of is not to be too insistent on our rights; and we can learn this from the parable in the sublime lesson it so admirably sets forth. A man may be pushing his rights too far when his insistency works a severe hardship on another; hence, if the law of strict justice is the standard of his dealings with his fellow man, he cannot expect that God will deal differently with him, and the same measure that he has used, so too must he expect in return. *You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust* (Matt. 5:43-45).

In the annals of the Church by Fleury, the following account serves to illustrate the true meaning of the instructive lesson in the parable. "Between two Christians in Antioch enmity had sprung up. After a while one of them desired to be reconciled, but the other, who was a priest, refused. While it thus fared with them, the persecution of Valerian began; and Sapricius, the priest, having boldly confessed himself a Christian, was on his way to death. Nicephorus met him, and again sued for peace, which was again refused. While he was seeking that peace which the other withheld, they arrived at the place of execution. He that should have been the martyr was here terrified, offered to sacrifice to the gods, and despite the entreaties of the other did so, making shipwreck of

his faith and of his soul; while Nicephorus, boldly confessing, stepped in his place and received the crown which Sapricius lost."

This example taken from ecclesiastical history furnishes a great lesson concerning the virtue of charity and the danger of the unforgiving spirit. That danger is nearer home than we are inclined to admit; for even though we forgive, because such is the indispensable condition of our own mercy from God in heaven, yet how often is this virtue of our faith narrowed down by limitations and actually strained by conditions which spoil the very flower and fruit of the virtue itself!

"His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this scept'red sway,
It is enthroned in the heart of kings;
It is an attribute to God Himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."

CHAPTER XII

Injustice in High Places

A common practice of injustice. The steward and the landlord. Maladministration of affairs. Commendation for foresight but not for injustice. The crux of interpreters. An instructive lesson. Jesus speaks. What St. Bernard says. Testimony of Eusebius. Another lesson of wisdom. Wealth and golden opportunities. The children of this world. Our own reckoning.

NOT only did our divine Lord attract the upright and God-fearing multitudes to follow Him in His apostolic journeys, but He likewise drew the publicans and public sinners to come and listen to His discourse (Luke 15: 1-2). Levi rose up at once from the "customs"; Zaccheus forsook his dishonest practices; Magdalen sought Him to weep out her sins at His feet. This is not at all so surprising when we pause to reflect who Christ was and the drawing power He possessed to win all classes to Himself. One who would pass for a leader among men must have certain qualifications for popularity in a good sense; such requirements are affability, benevolence, strength of character, and wisdom in his leadership. All such gifts, and greater still, our Lord possessed in an eminent degree; hence we can well understand how readily He attracted large multitudes. They felt perfectly at home in His presence, as His method of teaching was so different from that of the stern and formal teachers to which they had been for so long accustomed.

Besides the publicans, the Pharisees and scribes also came and mixed in the concourse with the other classes, not so much to profit by what they might hear as to carp at His words; in a word, to watch Him in a wrong sense,

for we are told they derided Him (Luke 16:14). As to the time when the present parable was spoken, it is generally admitted by commentators that it was in the last year of our Lord's ministry and not many months before He made His final journey to Jerusalem.

In all probability the conduct of the unjust steward in wasting his master's goods had been going on for a considerable time, and as such practices of dishonesty could not continue indefinitely without coming to the knowledge of the public, it seems probable that his own subordinates were the very ones who reported his acts of injustice. This is the common oversight notably evident in the lives of apparently clever men, that they seldom advert to that surveillance which is so often exercised on the part of those who are inferior to them in position. In this respect those in authority have more need to be on their guard than others, for the higher the mountain peak, the more easily it can be observed. Indeed, examples in Holy Writ are not wanting to convince us of this deceptive cunning which men, otherwise shrewd, unfortunately practice on themselves.

The brothers of Joseph vainly thought that their treatment of him was beyond revelation. So, too, with David, who thought his sin was so secretly planned that it could not come to light. As a matter of fact, evil deeds are more sure of circulation than those that merit commendation; for men seem to be more solicitous to discover wrongdoing, especially among officials, than they are to speak their praises. It is certain, too, according to Holy Writ, that *nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known* (Matt. 10:26); and we read in the Book of Job: *His* [*God's*] *eyes are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their*

steps. There is no darkness, and there is no shadow of death, where they may be hid who work iniquity (Job 34:21-22). No wonder, then, that the unjust steward was at length surprised by the revelation of his dishonesty. Generally speaking, the man in question is about the last to know that he is being watched and talked about; and when it comes to his knowledge that he is found out, the revelation causes such surprise and consternation that the distress of the culprit sometimes borders on despair.

It was quite common, and in keeping with commercial interests in Palestine, for a rich man to appoint a steward over his holdings. He was not an ordinary servant, but a man of affairs in the position of a gentleman. He had the supervision of the orchards and vineyards, the olive gardens, and the vested property in general. He made the leases and took charge of the revenues. These revenues, and the produce of the land, were generally made in various kinds, and it was the province of the steward to appraise the value of all such yields and make a disposition of the excess products in the interest of his master. Neither was it unusual for men in such prominent positions of trust and responsibility to abuse the implicit confidence of their employers by overtaxing the leases to the tenants and often demanding a raise in the rentals according to the yield of the harvest. They enriched themselves at the expense of both the master and his tenants; hence we can readily perceive how, in the course of time, the injustice of such questionable methods would amount to enormous sums.

Too, in all probability, the steward lived not only up to, but even beyond, his income and the means at his disposal for meeting his obligations. His life, very likely, was that of a prodigal spendthrift, which usually makes

heavy demands for the upkeep of sensual license and extravagant living. The principal character, therefore, in this parable, is well chosen by our divine Lord to send home a much-needed lesson to those who were only too well aware of what was going on in the higher circles of social life—the injustice in high places around them. It is not at all unlikely that, when the unjust steward was so pointedly described, there were not a few significant glances and knowing smiles exchanged among the crowd, as some at least would have had practical experience of how true to life was the force of the pointed parable.

When we take into consideration the custom that obtained between the landlord and his steward and the steward and the landlord's tenants in the extensive landholdings in the East, we can see how easily the corrupt manipulating of entrusted goods for one's personal interest and the disadvantage of one's master could be feasibly practiced. It is not quite certain what kind of documents were used in the transactions between the steward and the tenants; but if we go by the method of transacting business that usually obtained among the Jews of those ancient times, there were three distinct kinds of documents then in current usage. They had those that were graven on small waxen tablets, those inscribed with a stylus on parchment leather, and others that were done with pen and ink on the papyrus. It is evident that it would be quite feasible to alter figures made on waxen tablets.*

No sooner was the master informed of the existing state of conditions in the maladministration of his af-

* Among the Hebrews the falsification of numbers was easy, because their numerals were letters (Bonomelli V. 3, p. 243).

fairs, than he resolved immediately to dismiss his unfaithful steward. Wherefore his lord called him and said to him: *How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer* (Luke 16:2). There was no defense to make, for it was quite evident in the steward's mind that the allegations of maladministration were only too true.

We may form some idea of his plight by calling to mind what happens in a judicial way when fear and dread seize a culprit in the presence of his earthly judge. When a criminal has been caught red-handed in the perpetration of his crime and is brought before the officials of justice, his courage often completely fails. This is all the more likely when the facts are bared and there is little need for explanation on account of the overwhelming nature of the evidence. "I trusted you with my worldly goods, and there is nothing to show for my implicit confidence in your trust but waste and ruin," is his lord's reproach. He must now give an account of the crooked dealings that had transpired in his office. The sudden awakening that then seized him was simply appalling, and even more so when he heard the trenchant verdict that closed the interview: *For now thou canst be steward no longer.* He had no plea to disprove the charges alleged against him. He found himself a ruined man.

No time was to be lost, however, in useless speculation, and so he pondered over his official situation in a brief soliloquy. He mused to himself: *What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed* (vs. 3). He was rendered unfit for manual labor by a soft life of luxurious living in the past, and the public knowledge that

he had wasted his master's goods spoiled any chances of holding in the future a position similar to that which he had hitherto held. But the worst of all was staring him in the face, that he, who was so much looked up to and even dreaded because of his former power, would now be forced to a life of mendicancy, to beg his daily bread. In the Jewish mind begging was considered a kind of national disgrace. *And there shall be no poor nor beggar among you: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in the land which He will give thee in possession* (Deut. 15:4).

Before making out his final report for rendering the account of his stewardship, he has the opportunity, for one more time, to abuse his power; not indeed by appropriating any more of his master's capital for himself, for he has squandered too much of it, but to make some friends for himself by helping others before it is too late. Hence he has recourse to an ingenious method of intrigue, that of fraudulently remitting in part the debts of those whose names were inscribed among his master's debtors. Now he will win them over in making concessions that by cunningly devised favors were calculated to bind them to himself. A new thought struck him: "I see it"—*I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses* (Luke 16:4). He consequently summoned every one of his master's debtors while there was but a mere semblance of his vanishing stewardship still with him.

Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou still owe my lord? But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much

dost thou owe? Who said: An hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill and write eighty (vss. 5-7). Most likely he must have done the same for all the others, transferring in this cunning fashion the obligations that were personal to his lord by making them personal to himself. One after another of his lord's debtors was relieved of a part of his indebtedness; surely it must have been a delightful surprise to the debtors to be relieved of the obligation of paying a certain amount of a heavy debt. In the eyes of the Law it was not a direct theft, for he was still steward as long as all the legal formalities of handing over the documents pertaining to his office were not yet complied with.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward for as much as he had done wisely (vs. 8). Here it is hardly necessary to note that the steward was not commended for his injustice, nor for his previous mismanagement; but solely for this, that, placed in a difficult extremity, he had used his natural prudence, or worldly wisdom, to provide for the unpleasant contingencies that were sure to follow on his dismissal from the office of an official. In giving this commendation the master gave no expression as to the morality of the steward's act, but merely praised the shrewdness of his proceedings; for a bad deed may be well done and few can withhold admiration for the clever device to which this steward had recourse in an hour of extreme need.

That we may understand better the moral lesson of this parable, which has at times puzzled the minds of the learned, and is generally called the "crux of interpreters," it is necessary to remember that, for the interpretation of a parable, the chief thing to consider is the point of comparison in the simile that is introduced. What the

lord praised on the part of the unjust steward, was not indeed his cunning intrigue, but his astuteness* in being able to foresee a provision for the emergencies that threatened his impending ruin. His praise, however, did not prevent him from executing the determination he had already taken to depose his official from the office of a trusted steward. What we are invited to admire is the resourcefulness of the man who could stare in the face of hard facts and then prepare himself to meet the inevitable. In doing this our Lord distinguished between the steward's dishonesty and his foresight. For the one, there can be only a just disapproval; for the other, due praise on account of a judicious prudence which is usually found associated with a strong character.

The instructive lesson to be drawn from the application of the parable is thus lucidly set forth by our Lord Himself: *The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light* (Luke 16:8). By the children of this world is understood the seekers after the world's wealth with its round of pleasures; by the children of light is meant those who walk in the way of the Commandments, who live the life of grace and walk in the light of Christian faith.

St. Bernard aptly remarks: "The martyrs of the devil hasten more eagerly to death than we to life." And the learned Eusebius states that we can scarcely find any saint who used as much diligence and prudence in acquir-

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* It should be noted that among the Orientals astuteness is admired by the vulgar, and not regarded as dishonest, and with them all business is astuteness. Among them lying and cheating and thefts do not excite that contempt which, at least externally, they excite among us; they have a morality of their own, and Benon says truly that among these people truth is very relative.

ing eternal life, as worldlings have employed in gaining temporal riches. We read, too, of St. Louis that when in the East he was moved to jealousy by observing the zeal of the Mohammedans in transcribing the books which they counted sacred; and quoting our Lord's words: *The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,* he was henceforth stirred up to a more active multiplication of those books which would tend to promote a true holiness.* The persecutors of St. Stephen displayed an energy and tirelessness in their persecution of the Church which would have made them great apostles had it been done for a better cause.

The words *in their generation* are not without their special meaning in the parable. They signify not only in *their day,* but mean moreover *unto their generation.* They *are wiser,* they make more of their opportunities with associates of their own class for a combined effort at wrongdoing. What a problem it is at times to get Catholics to unite in any concerted action for the cause of Christian education or other projects in the interest of religion, even when the most sacred and the most inviolable rights are at stake! And meanwhile the enemies of the faith are at work, even working overtime, leaving nothing undone in trying to enact unjust laws that will legislate Catholics out of those inalienable rights. Thus has it happened in France, in Mexico, in most countries of Europe within the history of our own times; and, not to go so far afield, has it not happened recently in our own United States when political bigots spent enormous sums of money in foisting the Oregon School bill on the

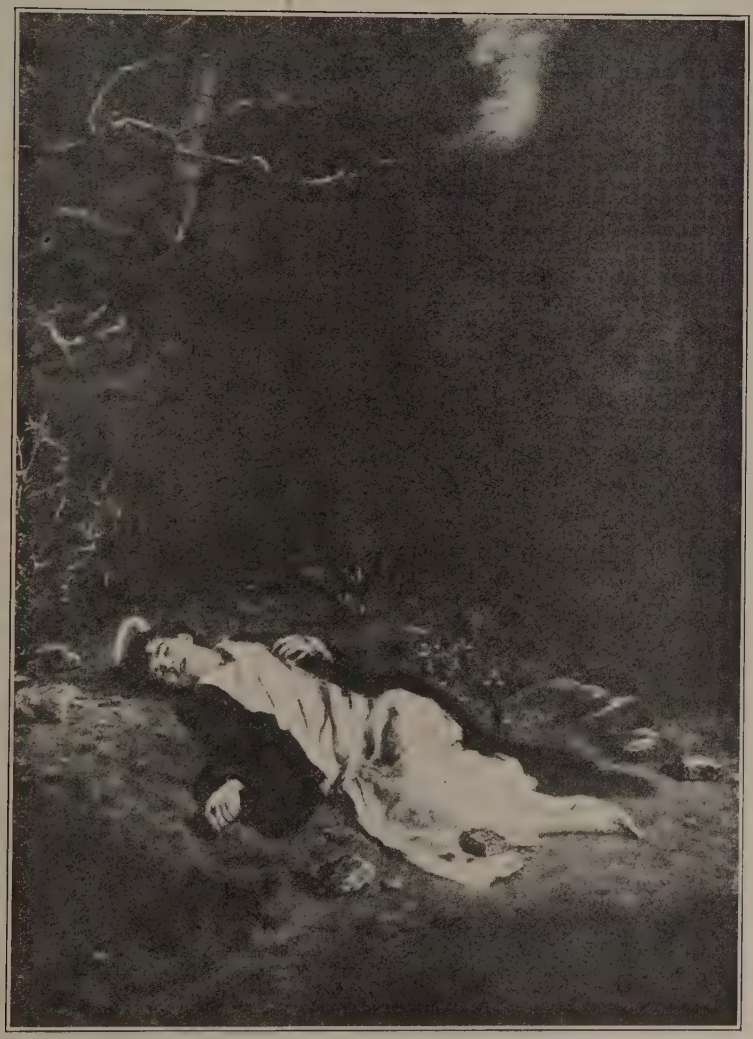
* Neander, Kirche Gesch. Vol. 1, p. 583.

public to legislate the Catholic parochial schools out of existence?* How difficult it is in these days even for an efficient Catholic woman to get a salaried position as a teacher in some of our city schools! Had she belonged to any sect or professed no particular kind of worship, the religious issue would not make any difference; but the children of darkness work more for one another than the children of light.

Besides the practical lesson our divine Lord would have us derive from the first application of the parable, there is another no less important which He Himself would have us take from the conduct of the steward in his prudent foresight to provide for the contingencies of the future. Christ explicitly points to this lesson in the following injunction: *And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon† of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings* (Luke 16:9). The "mammon of iniquity"! Mammon is the Syriac word for money, and it is called iniquitous because those to whom our Lord was speaking, chiefly publicans and Pharisees, made their money mostly by intrigue and injustice. The *iniquity,* by a figure of speech, just as we say *tainted* money, was supposed to be attached to the lucre on account of the wrong method used in acquiring it, or the sinful way in which it was squandered. Thus did the dismissed steward make the best use of his limited power before departing from his official position of trust, and with such skill and success that, when this power was finally taken away from

* The Oregon School bill was unanimously declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1925.

† The Greeks worshipped Pluto as the god of riches, and the Phoenicians Mammon. Mammon is of Punic origin.



THE STONING OF ST. STEPHEN

him, he received a ready welcome into comfortable dwellings.

Though this last feature of the parable has its practical application for all Christians, yet it seems to find its proper sphere in the lives of those who are blessed with a superfluous share of the world's goods. We are living in the days of millionaires, and in times also of very great poverty and dire distress. The clash between capital and labor has arisen from deep dissatisfaction over the unequal distribution of the world's wealth. Some are indeed over-rich while many are in a condition of straitened circumstances, if not of actual poverty and pressing need. The opportunity afforded to those who are rich teems with wondrous possibilities, in the way of making true friends through a judicious use of the wealth which God, in His providential plan, has intrusted to their care. What paying investments a rich man could make of his wealth were he to expend certain amounts in providing employment for those who are destitute, by endowing a maintenance for orphans or the aged poor! How many deserving young men could be helped towards following their vocation to the higher calling of the apostolate, if only they were maintained by those who have a superfluous share of this world's goods! *He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord: and He will repay him* (Prov. 19:17); hence his capital is so securely invested that his dividend is certain of realization at the time when he needs it most. But that same foresight which a shrewd man ordinarily uses for the success of his business deals seems oftentimes to vanish when the opportunity presents itself to use a like foresight for the spiritual and eternal interests of his soul.

When men of business, *the children of this world,* foresee that heavy assessments will be levied on the profits of their investments, they branch out into other lines of expenditure to swell the expense account and thereby diminish the assessment of their income tax. How profitably the men of faith, *the children of light,* could learn from Christ's own object lesson, in this parable of the unjust steward, how to branch out into various lines of spiritual expenditure along which they could invest in the interests of true charity, where no state officials dare to probe into their affairs, for the Master Himself has said: *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth* (Matt. 6:3).

The majority of men with means have the intention sooner or later of applying a certain amount for benevolent purposes; but instead of utilizing their present opportunities to relieve immediate and pressing needs, they delay the execution of their intentions until almost the time of their decease, when it is frequently too late to make proper adjustments of their estate for charitable purposes. The injunction of St. Paul has its practical application here: *Therefore whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith* (Gal. 6:10). This holds true especially in our own day, when state legislation has, in certain states, enacted unfavorable laws concerning the disposition of bequests to churches and charitable institutions, and when taxes are levied on the dividends accruing from one's income property. St. Paul wisely enjoined that such affairs should be carefully and wisely foreseen by us in time, since they cannot be attended to after death—in eternity, when time is taken away.

The most effective way for every individual to make friends with the "mammon of iniquity" is reached by either of two paths, and better still by both. They are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The corporal alms at our disposal can relieve bodily wants. These are enumerated in our catechism under the seven corporal works of mercy. The spiritual alms are also made known to us from childhood through the study of the little catechism. How perfectly the works of both orders pertaining to body and soul can secure for us an entrance into the everlasting dwellings, we can learn from the identical words which our divine Lord will say after our individual stewardship has been taken away. *Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked and you clothed Me; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying: Lord when did we see Thee hungry . . . . And the King answering shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me* (Matt. 25:34-40).

The *rich man* of the parable is *God Almighty,* and the relation of each one of us towards Him is that of a steward entrusted with heavenly goods for the salvation of our immortal souls. In the strict sense of the word there is nothing that is truly ours but time and eternity. As the day follows night, so does eternity follow time; one is the direct complement of the other, and time is the greatest asset in our possession to make its complement secure. We are the stewards of this life endowment of passing time, and the eternity that follows is the net

result, for weal or woe, according to the measure by which each one discharges his stewardship. Men have vainly devised certain outlooks wherewith to console themselves for the shortness of time. Time flies, says the worldling, let it go—*Let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments; and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere have tokens of joy* (Wisd. 2:6-9). But the flowers of yesterday's banquet are a sorry sight, and the echo of yesterday's revel has a mournful ring.

That which the Apostle says of the gift of grace is also true of all goods entrusted to our care, and even of our very selves. *What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?* (I Cor. 4:7). Indeed, our very souls are in our possession for the express purpose that we should take all care to enrich them with the merits of a virtuous life; and our bodies, too, are likewise in our keeping that we may fit them to become the living temples of the Holy Spirit: *Know you not,* says St. Paul, *that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (I Cor. 3:16). And the Apostle again tells us: *For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out* (Tim. 6:7). Wherefore, between our coming in and our going out, we are the trustees of temporal goods. They are handed over to us as a responsibility to traffic with, a sacred trust; but God is their sole proprietor, we are but the trusted stewards. We shall be held accountable for their use.

As the steward in the parable, so shall we be called upon for the reckoning of our stewardship. The unjust steward made friends for himself, in due time, with the goods of others. Those who inherit wealth acquired through doubtful sources should look out for themselves in time to make friends, so that, in the day of need, they may receive them into their everlasting home. Such friends are the poor and the needy, who will treasure up for them the riches with which they have relieved their distress, to return them a hundred-fold on the Day of Judgment.

The instructive lesson of the parable is for all. We have before us an object lesson of imitation in the keen foresight which elicited such high commendation from the master in regard to his trusted steward, even when the latter made use of the "mammon of iniquity." That same foresight which he used, that judicious provision he made for his material welfare, will, if wisely directed in a spiritual way, obtain for us friends who will welcome us into their everlasting dwellings.

"Oh, fortune! thou art not worth my least exclaim,
And plague enough thou hast in thy own name;
Do thy great worst, my friends and I have arms,
Though not against thy strokes, against thy harms."

CHAPTER XIII

Contrasting Contrasts

Vivid portrayal of a searching analysis. Scope of the allegory. Attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Doom of Dives; the cause, his lack of faith. More a history than a parable. Notes of SS. Cyril and Augustine—purple and fine linen: luxurious living. The root of all evil. A type of resignation. Taken to heaven. The death of Dives, his doom in hell—obsequies. In the Limbo of the just. The place of torments. A fundamental doctrine, life the trial time. Abraham and Dives. Flippant notions of modern thought. Trenchant reply of Abraham. Cause of damnation external and internal.

FOR a keen-telling analysis which lays bare contrasting details in the final issue of two human lives here and in the hereafter of time, the narrative of this allegory stands alone among the mild and gentle doctrines of the Gospel. Our divine Lord portrays in a realistic scene the true story of two men, not only as they appeared, but as they actually were; He treats of circumstances that so vividly characterized their lives in this world and in the next, and He also states the cause why the final issue of life for the two men is so different in the *world of spirits*. In three graphic scenes the lives of both, living at the same time and in the same country, are portrayed before us. The one was exceedingly rich—in modern parlance, a millionaire; the other, contrastingly poor—a pauper, who was found starved to death at the rich man's gate. Then a brief account is given of the death of each, and, in quick transition, the events that more quickly follow, in which our Lord reveals the awful contrast for the two men in the world beyond.

The principal object of the allegory is to bring before the Pharisees and Sadducees the final doom awaiting themselves because of their hypocritical lives, but most of all on account of their disbelief. The preceding parable of the "unjust steward" aroused the most bitter opposition on the part of the Pharisees and Sadducees concerning Christ's doctrine on the right use which should be made of their wasted opportunities and accumulated wealth. Their riches were acquired in various ways, but chiefly by enriching themselves as money-lenders among those who had to struggle for existence, the rank and file of the common people. For reasons best known to our Lord Himself, He referred to them in terms of reproach because they were more solicitous for the acquisition of material things than they were in providing for those that are spiritual. The Sadducees especially were noted for their skeptical tendencies concerning divine revelation in the Books of Moses and the Prophets. The fact is, in the time of our Lord they no longer disguised their materialism, but openly denied the resurrection of the body, and treated the immortality of the soul as an academic question.

Instead of taking the salutary lesson taught by Christ, of making a proper use of their worldly goods, they rather showed resentment and began to deride and mock Him, literally *turning up their noses.* Hence, to bring them to their senses through a just realization of the far-reaching consequences sure to follow their attitude of disbelief in Himself and His doctrine, He proceeds at once to lift the veil. Now He depicts a scene in the other world where one of their own class and nation was forced to admit that he was suffering the torments of the damned, not merely because he made an improper use of

his accumulated wealth, but principally because he had lost his faith, since he did not believe in the Books of Moses and the Prophets.

The damning sin of Dives in the parable is his loss of faith and final impenitence. The fact that he was hard-hearted, that he made an improper use of his riches, that he showed contempt for Lazarus, no doubt are all grave sins; they are, however, but the consequences of that graver sin by which a man refuses to believe what has been divinely revealed about the invisible world, known in this life by faith, and in the next by a blissful or woeful experience. He who does not believe in a life to come and makes up his mind that the present world is the only theater of his activity, must logically center all his hopes and aspirations on the things of sense—those which he can see and touch.

Dives surely did not believe in a God who rewards the charitable and punishes the unmerciful. That was evidently no canon in his social code; else it would be impossible to understand his attitude toward the poor Lazarus at his gate. Neither did he trouble himself about that higher spiritual world of grace known by faith—a world, not merely beyond the flight of time, but a real kingdom of faith and love, existing in the very midst of this selfish and godless world of sin. That this was his besetting sin, the sin of unbelief, is likewise evident from the statement he made about sending the spirit of Lazarus back to his five brothers to convince them that they should believe and do penance.

The parable also emphasizes this truth: that a kindred lot is sure to befall all those whose lives are no better than the Pharisees and Sadducees; for the rich Dives, together with his contrasting countryman, is a type that

divinely served to analyze human character concerning the essential requirements that make for weal or woe in the world to come. According to Irenaeus and Tertullian the parable is to be taken as a true history of the two men; and St. Ambrose adds: *Est narratio magis quam parabola.* (It is a historic account rather than a parable.)

That the striking events related in the narrative happened either during our Lord's lifetime, or not long before, there seems to be little room for doubt. One thing, however, is unmistakably certain: the story points to an object lesson on this earth, with its counterpart in the world of spirits where both men are in a state of finality —one in the *paradise of the just,* the other in the *abode of the lost.* And just as on this earth their lives were separated by the two opposite poles of social life—riches and poverty; so also, in that other world, their existence is absolutely apart by reason of that far greater contrast which must forever exist between the happiness of heaven and the punishment of hell.

There was a certain rich man, says our Lord, *who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day* (Luke 16:19). He withholds his name, very likely because he was so well known, for the sequel says he had five brothers still living; and our divine Lord, ever courteous even to the unfortunate, would not give the slightest ground for offense to the members of the household still surviving the rich epicurean. *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores* (vs. 20). The name of the poor man is given. This is not accidental, but in keeping with that divinely appointed ordinance which has no record of the names of sinners. It is thus explained by St. Cyril of Alexan-

LAZARUS AT THE RICH MAN'S GATE

dria.* "In saying 'there was a certain rich man' He indicates this hard-hearted man without giving any name, according to what God says, by the Prophet, of those who fear Him not: 'I will not remember any names with my lips.' But He recalls this poor man by name, inasmuch as these are on the tongue of God." "Seems He not to you," asks St. Augustine, "to have been reading from that book where He found the name of the poor man, but found not the name of the rich; for that book is the book of life?"

The *purple and fine linen* are classified together on account of the harmonic blend of rich and beautiful coloring, sea-purple and white, so greatly prized among the ancients. It was the royal hue and had always been considered as the princely gift made by a king. *And Mardochai going forth out of the palace, and from the king's presence, shone in royal apparel: to wit, of violet and sky color, wearing a golden crown on his head, and clothed with a cloak of silk and purple* (Esther 8:15). The value of the sea-purple of antiquity had passed into a proverb. Not less was the esteem in which the *byssus* or "fine linen" was everywhere held. This was the ordinary apparel, the costliest and best, which Dives used, while the sumptuous board was set for his daily fare.

"What is man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure He who made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To rust unus'd."

* The text is in Migne, P. C. 72,825 D-828 A.

According to the description of a modern writer: "Everything belonging to him was in the best style, as men speak: his house, his furniture, his plate of silver and gold, his attendants, his establishments. Everything was for enjoyment and for show, too, to attract the eyes of the world, and to gain the applause and admiration of his equals, who were the companions of his sins. These companions were doubtless such as became a person of such high pretensions: they were fashionable men, eating, not gluttonously, but what was rare and costly; delicate, exact, fastidious in their tastes, from their very habits of indulgence; not eating for the mere sake of eating, or drinking for the mere sake of drinking, but making a sort of science of their sensuality: sensual, carnal, as flesh and blood can be, with eyes, ears, tongue steeped in impurity; every thought, look, and sense witnessing or ministering to the evil one who held them; yet, with exquisite correctness of idea and judgment, laying down rules for sinning; heartless and selfish, high, punctilious, and disdainful in their outward deportment, and shrinking from Lazarus, who lay at the gate, as an eyesore, who ought for the sake of decency to be put out of the way."

There is no outright condemnation of the rich man for being rich, for riches, considered in the light of God's created things, are not bad in themselves. We do not read anywhere in Holy Writ that money is evil, but we do read that the love of money is the root of all evil. In fact, a rich man has a splendid opportunity because he is rich to make good use of his wealth, not only for promoting his own happiness in dealing with those less fortunate, but for securing his eternal interests as well. Nor can the fact that a rich man lives in keeping

with his means be a sin; but the continued neglect of others, combined with the continual sumptuous feasting while the others are starving, constitutes one of the most aggravating circumstances in provoking God's wrath on those who love riches.

Now, our Lord portrays the poor beggar Lazarus lying in a helpless condition of sheer destitution at the rich man's gate. We may wonder why he did not wend his way to the doors or gates of those who were of less pretentious standing than the rich Dives. He, no doubt, would have fared better, at least not worse; but he went whither he had the best right to look for help at a time when it was needed most, and to a source of supply where it was held in abundance and to spare. Poor Lazarus was mistaken, as so many others are often mistaken since his day when they expect to receive from the millionaires of the land that help which is so necessary in the hour of their need. *Desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores* (Luke 16:21).

To be destitute is sufficiently pitiful, but to be afflicted as Lazarus was with the sores of leprosy, or some such kindred disease, is reaching the very climax of human misery. How long he had to suffer in that sad condition we cannot tell, but we do know that his dire distress evoked no sympathy from the one source whence it should have come. It took the animal instinct of the dogs that gathered round him, to supply that service which the reason of rich gluttons failed to give while he was dying as a pauper outside their gate. He did not ask for much, since his wants were now reduced to the minimum and hence could be so easily supplied; all he

craved for were the "crumbs" that fell from the richly set table, and no one did give him.

Coming to the second scene, we are introduced to a setting altogether different. At last has the fateful hour of justice struck! The beggar and the millionaire both have come to the end of their respective careers. *And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom* (vs. 22). What a contrast between the disposition made of his body, fouling in the corruption of that living death outside the rich man's gate, and that royal reception given his immortal soul at the hands of angels, escorting him to the bosom of Abraham! Death at last brought an end to all his misery by releasing his soul from its prison of clay, to wing its flight to the very paradise of the just.

No sooner had Lazarus died than God sent His recording angel to hold the inquest over his remains. As to how his death was brought about there can be no doubt, for the signs of extreme want, with continued neglect, were all but too truly visible. Had his remains been found only somewhere else, in the back alley of some deserted street, the judgment at the inquest might not have gone so hard against Dives; but when God's angel found the body of Lazarus at the rich man's gate, at the gate of plenty, and found him there starved to death, here was a crime that made the welkin ring from the rich man's gate up to the very portals of heaven for the verdict of condemnation. And the angel wrote the name of Lazarus in the Book of Life with the footnote: *Found starved to death at the rich man's gate.*

Lazarus having died first had apparently no friends, barring the hungry dogs whining about him. There were no tender nurses to soothe his last moments with the

balm of sympathy or consolation; and because he was a pauper, no sooner did the news of his death reach the town officials than the usual unceremonious funeral set out for the Potter's Field. The poor man who claimed no home of his own in life had no likelihood of receiving a grave of his own in death.

And the rich man also died (vs. 22). His turn came next after Lazarus. Here, indeed, there is another display of divine mercy in giving him a longer time to realize his notable shortcomings. His day of grace, however, drew also to its final close, and he died and was buried. The world never allows such an important event to slip by unnoticed. It must furnish an expensive, richly-mounted casket, banked with the artistic display of nature's luxuriant bloom in roses and lilies, the conventional symbols of the beauty of love and the chastity of life. It will borrow even from religion some externals of its liturgical ceremonial for the final seal of mockery which it stamps on the cerements of the tomb. But what deception! While the epicurean is being eulogized in the presence of his corrupting remains, his numberless violations of the Divine Law are being added up against him, not merely what he has done amiss, but what he has so notably left undone.

In the mere fact of the rich man's death there was nothing in itself so very striking, neither could the act of dying elicit any token of surprise in the death of one more than in the other, because death is the final shift in the varied scenes of every man's life, whether rich or poor. But now the sharp contrasts that followed the departure of the two men loom up in the most striking evidence on the other side. We have God's word for it that Lazarus *was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom,*

to that Limbo of the just where all the elect were awaiting the graces of the redemption. Ah, what a change greets his astonished vision! To be taken from the forbidding entrance of a gateway to the welcome vestibule of heaven! To leave the company of dogs and to share that of angels! To be borne on the wings of heavenly spirits in triumph, to hear their hosannas of praise: *Pauper in coelum divis ingreditur!* On to the great White Throne of heaven, there to hear the glad welcome from the lips of God: *Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (Matt. 25:21)!

But when the rich man died, we have also God's word for it, *he was buried in hell* (Luke 16:22). In this third scene of the parable we are given a glimpse of the contrast between the rich man on earth and his soul in hell. *And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom* (vs. 23). Now he calls for assistance. How sad his surprise must be! From opulence to destitution! From earthly delights to eternal torments! He is in torments, and is tormented in flame.

What a strange sight it must have been for him to lift his eyes from a place of torments and see that once-despised Lazarus in the enjoyment of bliss with Abraham his father! How did it all happen to come about, and in such a strange way? "Is Lazarus in heaven because he was poor at my gate?" No, Mr. Dives! He is there because he was poor without murmuring or complaint; he did not curse God because you refused him the crumbs that fell from your table. You are in hell, not because you were rich, while Lazarus was poor, but because you made an improper use of your riches—riches which were entrusted to your keeping for the good use you could

have made of them, and not for the bad use you made of them in sin.

That we may better understand the awful straits to which the rich man was reduced in his infernal doom, our divine Lord permits Dives to describe his torture in figurative language conversing with "Father Abraham." Across the chasm fixed between them he has recourse to a despairing appeal. *Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame* (vs. 24). As an Israelite he can justly claim kinship with Abraham, just as the Pharisees do; but how far he has been from deserving the sonship of so illustrious a father, his present doom plainly tells. Surely Abraham, the patriarch of faith and the father of all believers, cannot recognize as an heir one who lived a life of sin and rejected the Books of Moses and the Prophets. *Send Lazarus.* Must it come to that, Dives? On earth you would not permit him to darken the threshold of your palace gate, and now you are asking him to leave the abode of bliss in order that he may quench your thirst in hell!

Too late! Hell is the one and only place where these words are, alas, too true. *Son,* replies Abraham, not refusing the endearing title the doomed man had to his kinship, and thus enabling him to realize the impossibility of granting his request by analyzing the cause that forced justice to decree the verdict of his damnation; *son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented* (vs. 25). Yes, it has come to this! Above every other consideration, that of justice must prevail. During life the rich Dives made

the good things of earth consume his heart's desires; for things beyond he had no hope, as he had not the virtue of faith. On the contrary, Lazarus received nothing but the hard "ups-and-downs" of life. In the language of the day they were misfortunes, but he did not look on them as such; rather he lived by faith and looked forward to that better hope, like Job in the hour of his trial, still blessing God in the depths of his misery.

Life beyond the grave is exactly what each one strives to make it while here, no more and no less. Dives and Lazarus are true types of every man's work in the very midst of life and while the power of choice is still with him, but the fact of death has sealed the lives of both and has fixed the seals forever. There is absolutely no way out of this inevitable fact writ large, so that he who runs, as well as he who walks leisurely along, may read alike; and this fact remains, notwithstanding the vagaries of the modernists who would have us believe that Dives started to repent in hell, and that in the next life there are transitions and the successive stages of progress. All this is sheer nonsense!

The fate of Dives in hell and the bliss of Lazarus in heaven both rest on the fundamental doctrine that this present life is man's trial time, whereas the life beyond is the state of finality where the soul has reached its final stage of bliss or misery. Moreover, the state in which the soul will eventually find itself is the net result of its own free choice which was made during its trial time here on earth. Again, that choice is fixed and final, for the human will, always free during the trial time, is no longer free to change in the ultimate term of finality. Man's will at death is the will of man forever, for after death one is powerless to change his unrepentant will.

The absolute truth of this doctrine is evident from the words spoken by Abraham in his response to Dives. *Between us and you there is fixed a great chaos; so that they who would pass from thence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither* (vs. 26). It is the final decree of God's inexorable justice, so that to grant the request of Dives would be not only unjust, but impossible. The impossibility is illustrated by the impassable gulf which is too deep to be filled up and too wide to be bridged over. *There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are cast out* (Ps. 35:13).

The unfortunate Dives had no defense to make to Abraham's answer. The explanation was complete; the question was settled for all time. But our Lord injects a new thought into the parable in which He makes a personal application of the further worries now tormenting the soul of the damned. The *disbelief* of the rich man's brothers, with which *he,* doubtless, had much to do, since it hints at the cause of his own personal damnation, suggested the further request: *Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments* (Luke 16:28).

It may seem, indeed, strange that such a request was made, but we must remember that a very special reason, of far-reaching consequence to all mankind, was involved in knowing that such a question was asked, and that it was asked under such unheard-of circumstances. Dives belonged to the skeptic class of the Pharisees in Palestine; now he knows that the time is sure to come when his brothers, having shared in his unbelief and riotous living, will also share his doom in hell, and will lay much of the blame for their perversion and final impenitence

on the bad example of which he was very much the cause in their father's house. This request meets with a like refusal. Again it is precise and clear-cut and final; he is now given to understand that the ordinary witnesses are at hand to testify to the truths of divine revelation, the very witnesses whom God provided to testify unto truth in Israel: *They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them* (vs. 29).

How flippant people are in laying down conditions for doings in the supernatural world—just as they are with regard to the affairs of God's Church as ordered by the new code of Canon Law! What more authentic testimony could the family of Dives possess than that given by God through Moses and the prophets? Looking at the fact of the strange request from a sentimental viewpoint, it may appear to carry some weight for consideration, but sentiment has no weight in the balance of eternity. Even if the miracle were to take place, there is no likelihood that it would have any effect on the family of Dives, any more than such a miracle taking place in our midst today would have the effect of changing the lives of our modern millionaires into those of penitential saints.

No doubt the press would describe graphically the uncanny apparition; the mansion of the modern Dives would be photographed in the latest artistic finish; the movies would have a special film for the crumbs falling from the rich man's table, and another for Lazarus dying an outcast at the rich man's gate; and, in all likelihood, there would be yet another scene describing Lazarus cleansed from his leprous sores and making a second call at the gates of Dives. That the world in general might derive more profit and the wicked sinners be converted, a recording angel should assist and broadcast

the substance of the interview, so that the world might listen in and sit up and take notice. The world always reasons in such sentimental fashion. Not satisfied with the ordinary ways God has provided for dealing with things supernatural, it looks for the extraordinary—just as today those who have no true faith are continually consulting ouija-boards and planchettes, seeking knowledge from the spirits of the dead, when God has expressly commanded that the knowledge of supernatural truths must come through revealed faith. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned* (Mark 16:16).

But once again he who had been given such a peremptory refusal sought to repeat his request and to insist: *No, Father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance* (Luke 16:30). Well did he know that the ordinary sources of belief would make no impression on his five brothers any more than they had on himself in the days of his flesh; but now he thinks that, whereas the ordinary means of grace had failed to suffice in his family circle, at least the extraordinary tokens of miraculous intervention would have a chastening effect on them. It is notably evident from his last appeal that neither himself nor his brothers paid any attention to Moses and the prophets; neither was the virtue of penance in honor among them, since it will take nothing less than an extraordinary first-class miracle to bring the salutary thought of penance into their sinful lives. It is likewise evident, from the nature of the appeal made in favor of his brothers, that he has no hope of their conversion if they continue to live as he had lived with them before his death; and that they, too, will come into this place of torments (vs. 28).

They will do penance. The Jews demanded of Christ that He come down from the Cross and they would believe in Him. *If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him* (Matt. 27:42). God does not grant extraordinary favors to those who fail to appreciate the ordinary. Hence the world today is teeming with skeptics who, having failed to profit by the usual methods of knowing God and His Christ, are continually groping in the darkness of their own errors, asking silly and stupid questions about the future life, should they still hold that it exists. We are asked time and again: "Who ever came back to tell us that there is a hell?" There is but one answer to all such irrelevant and absurd questions, and it is that given in Abraham's final trenchant negative reply to Dives: *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead* (Luke 16:31).

This reply of Abraham certainly clears up many vexing questions because of the clear insight it gives us into the nature of faith as a moral act. Faith cannot be forced by extraordinary signs; for whenever the mind is ruled by skeptical notions, there is no impression which miracles, even when taken for genuine, might make that will be more than passing. When the historical Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Pharisees were not by this stupendous miracle convinced of the divine claims and power of Him who had called Lazarus from the grave—and this notwithstanding the fact that they acknowledged the reality of the miracle itself (John 12:9-37). Greater than Lazarus has come back from the other world; nay, He has risen from the dead; yet has this outstanding fact in the life of Christ been sufficient to persuade the modern world that Christ is divine, that He

is the eternal Son of God? It is also strikingly notable how the Lord Himself after His Resurrection showed Himself, not to the Pharisees, not to His enemies, *not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He arose again from the dead* (Acts 10:41).

To someone the question might naturally suggest itself: What, after all, did Dives do that he was sent to a place of torments? Surely there is no mention made in the Gospel narrative that he was a bad man. Can the mere fact that he lived well and in keeping with his means be a sufficient reason for his condemnation? No, indeed! Not merely for that. The reason is twofold, external and internal. Since the external reason for his condemnation may appeal more to us, let us simply state that he made an ill-use of his worldly goods in gluttony and luxury. Then there was his hard-heartedness towards the poor, going so far as not to give even the crumbs that fell from his table to the mendicant Lazarus, who crouched at his gate in dire distress. The internal reason, his practical loss of all faith, though not so apparent, is the underlying cause why he failed to follow the advice given by our divine Lord in the preceding parable of the unjust steward. Moreover, the unfortunate man virtually declares his lack of faith, as well as that of his brothers, including the Pharisaic party in Israel, and Abraham practically confirmed the admission: *neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead* (Luke 16:31).

Finally, the important lesson to be taken from the study of this parable, in the striking illustrations which it sets before us, is to take notice and profit by the irremediable mistakes made by the unbelieving Jews.

Christ clearly foretold the punishments that certainly awaited them if they would not believe, repent, and do penance. The reference to the rich man's love of pleasure and the misuse of his worldly goods has special force in our own times when so many of the ultra-moderns live after the same pagan fashion, without faith here or hope for the hereafter. It had, besides, a most practical significance as a prophetic warning to Israel, in view of the fact that very soon another Lazarus would be raised from the dead and that stupendous miracle would be supplemented by that of Christ's glorious Resurrection almost immediately to follow.

"O Happy Land, whose roses know no thorns;
Whose bowers no fickle larkspur e'er disclose.
Thrice blessed Salem! Eden of delights!
E'en as the parched roe for cooling spring,
The soul—Oh! how it throbs and yearns for Thee!
On swiftly-soaring pinions of desire,
Dove-like it flies to feast on all Thy charms.
O Heaven! O soul-entrancing Paradise!
Thou realm of rest, beyond the shoals of time!
Thou Land of Life! Our own eternal Home!"

CHAPTER XIV

True Philanthropy

Scene of the parable. The Samaritans. Historical notes. Jesus and the Jewish doctor. A much-mooted question. Neighborship among the Jews. Stanley's description of the parabolic scene. The Samaritan act above racial sentiment. St. Paul's citation. Not the letter of the Law, but its spirit. A divine motive. Supernatural faith. Community-chest activities. A new name for an old virtue. Samaritan heroes in the modern world.

FOR a better understanding of the bearing which the present parable should have on our lives, it will be advantageous to have some knowledge of the conditions of the time and place where the scene is laid; also to know something of the history of the Samaritans themselves, as well as the causes that led up to their national prejudices against the Jews. The scene of the parable lies between Jerusalem and Jericho, which are separated by about seventeen miles of desert and mountainous country. According to St. Jerome a certain section of this very road was in his day called *locus sanguinum,* "place of blood," on account of the many murders therein committed.

The name Samaritan, meaning a native of the province of Samaria, is used in the New Testament in a restricted sense to qualify an adherent of a certain religious sect. The origin of the Samaritans as a distinct people goes back to the division of the twelve tribes of Israel. Under Roboam, son of Solomon, who reigned over all Israel, ten of the tribes, separating from those of Juda and Benjamin, chose Jeroboam for their king. This gave rise to two distinct kingdoms, that of Juda, having for its capi-

tal Jerusalem, and the kingdom of Israel with the city of Samaria as its chief city. In the course of time a succession of political upheavals between the two kingdoms gradually brought about the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, leaving Samaria so desolate and deserted that the king of the Assyrians sent colonists from Babylon and from the remote parts of Persia and Media to colonize the land. They took the name of Samaritans from the territory which they invaded, bringing with them their superstitious practices and varied forms of idolatry.

As soon as the Jews returned from the captivity of Babylon and were ready to reconstruct the ancient temple of Solomon, the Samaritans demanded that they be permitted to assist in its reconstruction. The Jews, considering their sect as inimical to the worship of the true God, scorned them and rejected their offers. This refusal was keenly resented by the Samaritans and resulted in the national hostility that has ever since existed between the two peoples. With the lapse of time the political situation deepened. Its shadows lengthened until at last came the climax of the racial aversion about the year 409 B. C. when a Jewish priest, Manassah by name, and a blood relation of the High Priest, married the daughter of the Persian Governor of Samaria. This unlawful alliance led to his excommunication from Jewry; then he set about reforming the Samaritan worship, and with the permission of the Persian king erected a pseudo-temple on Mount Garizim, near Sichem, rivaling that of Jerusalem. This brings us to Christ's time, when Palestine had two distinct races, strangers in blood, in manners, and in religion, their local situation only serving the more thoroughly to bring about their mutual and abiding hatred.

At the time of our Lord the Samaritans were a mixed race made up partly of the Israelites who remained behind after the time of the Assyrian captivity and those emigrant Gentiles who were sent to colonize Samaria. Their religion was a compound of Judaism and heathenism, with only an obscure conception of the true worship of Jehovah, which they observed after a fashion of their own. Their temple on Mount Garizim had been destroyed by the Jews 120 years before the coming of Christ, and from that time on they lived without priest, altar, or sacrifice; and yet they were ever looking forward in the expectation of the coming Messias, for they were persuaded that they had the same rights as Juda. This disposition brought them into constant feuds with the Jews, who considered them usurpers and looked down upon them as descendants of an inferior race.

It was while our Lord was preaching the Gospel of the messianic kingdom in the neighborhood of Jericho, that a certain lawyer, or doctor of the law, was present. Amazed at the sublime doctrine that fell from the lips of the new Teacher, and fearing, too, lest perhaps his own talents might be eclipsed, he determined to interrupt the instruction of Christ by asking Him a question. St. Luke says he *stood up, tempting Him* (Luke 10:25). The word "tempt" in Scripture means also to try in the sense of putting a subtle question. He, like many men of his type who make much pretense of learning, but, more for the sake of embarrassing others, often pretend not to know, had a question to ask: *Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?* (vs. 25). Our divine Lord, reading his thoughts, looked intently at His interrogator, and knowing that he was a lawyer skilled in the profession and practice of the Law itself, said to him: *What is writ-*

ten in the Law? How readest thou? (vs. 26); as if He had said: Are you not sufficiently instructed to know what the Law requires?

The lawyer's reply gave the most complete summary of the Mosaic Law then prevalent among his countrymen, comprising in clear and pithy phrases the relationship of every man's conduct to God, and thence to his fellow man. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself* (vs. 27).

A splendid compendium of the whole Mosaic legislation! Jesus simply confirmed his answer by saying: *This do and thou shalt live* (vs. 28). In this divinely approved exposition of what the lawyer read, the Law reveals itself issuing from the heart, as from the center of the moral life, to spread thence into the soul or consciousness, into the strength or will, into the mind or intellect, the most wonderful trinity that sums up the whole man.

But the lawyer, wishing *to justify himself,* either to show off his own knowledge of critical inquiry, or for the sake of escaping public humiliation, sought to cover his retreat by asking the further question: *And who is my neighbor?* (vs. 29). Jesus, now determined to settle this important question for all time, answered him by relating one of His most striking parables.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who both stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey came near him;

and seeing him, was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said: Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee. Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbor to him who fell among robbers? But he said: He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner (Luke 10:30-37).

The actual question which gave rise to the parable was a double one. At first the lawyer simply asked how he might reach heaven. Since our Savior referred him to the great commandment of love of God and his neighbor, he then inquired who this neighbor was whom he must love as himself. The double question was in itself good, though apparently not so the intention of the doctor of the Law.

The first question with regard to heaven was much mooted at the time, since the Jewish schools were divided upon it; but it was ever a settled point with the Jews that only their fellow countryman, the Israelite, was to be understood by the terms "brother" and "friend." On the other hand, the Pharisees disputed whether the Israelite owed love and mercy to the Gentiles and Samaritans, and even whether he might without sin exercise these virtues in their regard. At all events the hypocritical Jews, and especially the Pharisees, wished to excuse themselves and evade the Law by means of this racial dispute. The lawyer had, therefore, touched on one of the practical, burning questions of the day, and the answer was bound to be critical.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

In all probability the man despoiled by the robbers must have been a Jew making a journey from the city on business. The priest and Levite were, of course, Jews, very likely also returning from the Temple City after conducting the rabbinical service. Jericho was one of the principal cities of the Promised Land, and was the chief seat of the priesthood which Moses and Aaron had established by the ordinance of Jehovah. In the Book of Deuteronomy (34:3), it was called the *city of palm trees.*

Those familiar with the scene where this parabolic tragedy occurred know that there are many places on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho where a traveler could easily be waylaid and overpowered, and where his pleading appeal for help in the tragic struggle for life would be answered only by his own faint echoes. The scene of the "holdup" which bore the ill-omened name of "the bloody way" is graphically described in a recent work by Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine.*

"There we see the long descent of three thousand feet, by which the traveler 'went down' from Jerusalem on its high table-land to Jericho on the Jordan Valley. There the last traces of cultivation and habitation, after leaving Bethany, vanish away, and leave him in a wilderness as bare and solitary as the desert of Arabia. Up from the valley of the Jordan below, or from the caves in the overhanging mountains around him, issue the Bedouin robbers, who from a very early time gave this road a proverbial celebrity for its deeds of blood, and who now make it impossible even for the vast host of pilgrims to descend to the Jordan without a Turkish guard. Sharp turns of the road, projecting spurs of rock, everywhere facilitate the attack and escape of the plunderers. They seize upon the traveler and strip him, as is still the cus-

tom of their descendants in like case; they beat him severely, and leave him, naked and bleeding under the fierce sun reflected from the white glaring mountains, to die, unless some unexpected aid arrives."

The above description enables us to realize how powerless was the passing wayfarer in his encounter with the robbers. It is surely revolting to know that, even for the sake of any personal consideration, human nature could be so basely inhuman at the hands of professional evildoers; and it is next to sickening to see the victim of the brigandage so inhumanly neglected at the hands of men professedly religious. The priest and the Levite returning to their priestly city happened to pass that way, but, unworthy descendants of their great High Priest Aaron, both crossed over to the other side of the road and passed him by.

A Samaritan also passed by that way and, beholding the wounded man, was touched with pity at his sad plight. He drew nigh and staunched his wounds to prevent further loss of blood, *pouring in oil and wine.** Then he placed him upon his own mount and, leading him to an inn, took care of him. The next morning he gave the innkeeper two pence, and said to him: *Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shall spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee.* The "two pence" given to the host were two Roman coins, called *denari* (worth about twenty cents each of our money)—the cost of two days' board.

The high point in the parable is the lawyer's question: *And who is my neighbor?* Evidently, the meaning of "neighbor" was, to say the least, somewhat vague and

* The Hebrews when traveling were accustomed to take with them wine and oil as a provision for the journey or as a medicine.

nebulous in the mind of the Jewish doctor. That vagueness clouding his perception of Samaritan neighborship at once disappears in the light of the object lesson in which Christ rather pointedly portrayed the waylaid traveler going down the rocky gorge to Jericho; a simple story in which that Good Samaritan by his neighborly deed has made the road taken by a passing, wounded wayfarer memorable among the highways of the ancient world. Henceforth every man, no matter who, be he enemy or friend, and prescinding from his environs of race or religion, is kin to his fellow man; and this is all the more true when, in the language of the day, his fellow man is "down and out."

Now after proposing to the doctor of the Law the three types of men, and having so pertinently described their different attitudes in treating their robbed and doomed fellow creature, Christ asked: *Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbor to him who fell among the robbers? But he said: He that showed mercy to him.* The doctor was too intelligent not to see that there was but one answer to that straight question. In fact, it was the only answer that could be given after Christ had so clearly drawn the contrast between the neglect and indifference of both the priest and the Levite, and the first-aid attention and charity of the Good Samaritan. It would have been nothing short of a mental impossibility for a man of his profession not to perceive its only meaning, and frankly to acknowledge the truth of what it implied. Still, not wishing to include Samaritans and Gentiles in the definition of his "neighbors," he had not the candor to say at once *the Samaritan,* but had recourse to circumlocution. *He,* he says, *that showed mercy to him.*

And who is my neighbor? Christ showed the Samaritan to the Jew. In doing this He solved the difficulty. What marvelous wisdom here! A lesson hitherto unknown was now given to the Jewish doctor and incidentally to the whole world. Christ taught the Jew that, since the Samaritan had included one of his race among his neighbors, so he likewise must learn to enlarge his heart and look beyond the confines of racial limits for a comprehensive definition of neighborship. Was the Samaritan not an enemy of the Jew? He was more. In business he was his rival. He was looked upon with that inexpressible sentiment of contemptuous aversion, a complex of disgust and jealousy. The Jew, no doubt, was considerate and even kind towards those of other lands of whom he had heard and with whom he came in contact for affairs of business. We can hardly doubt that he hated the haughty Roman, who lorded it over him, and held over the whole world that prestige which the Jew himself so long dreamed of for his own race. But in this anti-Roman feeling, however just, there was a combination of dread and submission, for the Jew realized that under the iron heel of Rome he enjoyed security, if not peace and prosperity. Towards the Samaritan, matters stood quite differently. He had come to Israel as an invader and had gradually settled in the very heart of the land that belonged to the Jew by inheritance. He had rivaled him in the construction of a temple and offered sacrifice to Jehovah in rites which the Jew held sacred and exclusively his own. More than all, he outclassed him in the virtue of charity, being kind and considerate in his social service to humanity.

The doctor of the law asked who was his neighbor, and the answer given was a reference to an object lesson that

had recently occurred in the person of one who had fulfilled the office of neighbor to another. Our Lord so formulated the question for the doctor that he had to admit, though unwillingly, that this detested stranger alone fulfilled the obligation of being a neighbor to the Jew.

The parable was closed. The application of its sublime lesson was now inevitable. *And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner* (Luke 10:37). In brief, it comes to this: "Do unto others as you would be done by." Wherefore in spite of all barriers of nationality, of religion, of private or public antipathies, be a neighbor to every man in trouble. Were misfortune to come to thee thyself, whom wouldst thou wish to find upon the way as a kind neighbor? Any man, without doubt. Therefore consider that in thy turn thou must treat every man as thy neighbor.

Now, we may ask, what was the motive that urged the Samaritan to go to the assistance of the robbed and wounded Jew? Evidently none other than that noble, basic principle enunciated by the doctor of the law, the love of God and the love of one's neighbor. Here it is not a matter of mere sentiment, for my sentiments towards others are liable to change, and to change with every point of the compass, but my better judgment tells me that unless I give "first-aid" attention to that wounded man, he will surely bleed to death. The Good Samaritan on the road to Jericho was led not so much by his sentiments as by his intelligence; for, did he yield to the former, he had indeed much greater reason to pass the wounded man by than either the priest or the Levite. Had he been actuated by racial feelings, the traveler from Samaria would have hurled at this doomed outcast

the insulting epithet he himself had hundreds of times heard from Jewish lips: "It is but a dog; let me pass."

But the despised Samaritan thought and acted otherwise. His were not the spiritual advantages of the Jew; yet, strange to relate, for truth is often strange, he had that in which the Jew was so notably deficient. St. Paul tersely says: *The Gentiles, who followed not after justice, have attained to justice, even the justice that is of faith. But Israel, by following after the law of justice, is not come unto the law of justice. Why so? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were of works. For they stumbled at the stumblingstone* (Rom. 9:30-32).

The Jew knew the Law, but he lacked the working spirit back of it; he never got beyond its details of legal prohibitions; hence, he was unable to generalize and far less initiate action for the love of God with all his heart when staring in the very face of his neighbor's misfortune. This was indeed the cause of the spiritual failure of the Jews; they stressed over-much the letter of the Law, and missed its true spirit; to use our Lord's own words: *who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel* (Matt. 23:24).

Wherefore with one master stroke Christ settled the difficult question of neighborship for all time, giving us to understand clearly that personal likes and dislikes must not be thrown as weight into the balance, if our actions are to be stamped with the seal of divine currency in His kingdom. Not, however, that He expects us to like the unlikeable from the natural viewpoint; but He does expect us to lay aside our natural prejudices, just as we ourselves would have others do were we personally concerned. For want of a better word, we may call this the motive of reciprocity which rests upon a

base as vast as mankind, and ultimately on the great love of God Himself.

When our Lord would have us perform an act deserving divine approval, He suggests a motive couched in words few and precise: *As you did it to one of these . . . you did it to Me.* That is to say, what is done is done directly to Himself, and only indirectly to the recipient of the merciful act. It does not mean, however, that our Lord intended we should lose sight of the objects of our benevolence in the bestowal of our gifts; nay, He wants us to think of them, as is evident from the wondering query of the just: *Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty and gave Thee drink? . . . And the King answering, shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me* (Matt. 25:37, 40).

"Ask God to give thee grace in comfort's art,
That thou may consecrated be and set apart
Unto a life of sympathy;
For heavy is the weight of woe in every heart,
And comforters are needed much,
Of Christ-like touch."

Practically it comes to this, that in every human being we see Christ Himself as the object which His love has focused on our spiritual vision, the imperfect likeness of the representative to the contrary notwithstanding. But how can we see Christ in one whose conduct jars on our sensibilities and whose deplorable shortcomings are so painfully nettling? Yes, in him; though not in his jarring deficiencies. We must ever bear in mind that, while man is made to the image and likeness of God, the true like-

ness is not in his visible body but in his invisible soul. My neighbor may be a dead failure as a fitting representative of Him who bids me to see only Himself in the least of His brethren, because the likeness is so poor, reminding me of an amateur kodak negative that is blurred and somewhat out of focus. Yet, withal, it is some likeness, and if touched up under the white light of faith, may have real value as an excellent reminder. Besides, the more remote the likeness, the more pure will be the charity; because then we are not acting on account of any personal attraction to the man himself, but solely to please Him whose image in His creature is often nothing better than a blurred reproduction.

There is much that may be said in favor of the numerous philanthropic societies which have been organized in our time for the benefit of the poor and needy. It is one way of reaching the wealthier classes who do not profess the Christian faith. It is doubtful, however, to say the least, if such civic organizations, whose endeavors are heralded far and wide through the Community Chest activities of our large cities, are ever motivated by the divine ideal of seeing Christ subjectively in the intention, and objectively in the beneficiaries of the social service which they are rendering. If these external acts are done merely to give an outlet to the expansive energy of the individuals, and only incidentally to give relief to the indigent objects of their benefactions, there is danger of "losing the picture in the frame"; because the interior spirit, the supernatural motive which is the animating soul of the work, is left undeveloped, if not lost sight of altogether. It is this interior spirit motivated by the love of Christ which gives to every work its supernatural value; if it is neglected, the mere external acts are made

an end in themselves and hence entitled only to a passing recompense; while the cup of water, trivial as it appears, if given in His name, has its lasting reward. Because of this supernatural principle, our holy Faith would have us foster the habit of renewing our spiritual intention from time to time, by asking God to *anticipate our actions by His holy inspirations and to continue them by His gracious assistance.*

Though social-service activities are encouraged and fostered by the Church in various ways, it rests, however, with the individuals who belong to such clubs, if they are looking for a lasting token of divine recognition rather than the passing notoriety that comes from large headlines, with flattering write-ups in sensational news columns, to see Christ in the objects of their benevolence, by feeding the hunger of Christ, clothing the nakedness of Christ, redressing the wrongs of Christ. All this is to be done impersonally, yet definitely, by seeing Christ in them.

After all, social service is but a new name for a divine virtue as old as Christianity itself; and it flourishes best of all in the lives of those whose kindly offices and far-reaching benefactions are seldom or never chronicled in Community Chest activities and other kindred organizations of a mere social nature. Such social service is done in the many Homes for the Aged Poor; it is done, though not talked about, in the hospitals conducted by the numerous sisterhoods throughout the country. Too, it is done, perhaps in a more appealing way, in the orphanages where children bereft of parents are placed under the fostering care and religious influence of self-sacrificing (religious) sisters; and is it not done, where perhaps it is so seldom considered being done, in the asylums

for the wayward, conducted by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, where they care for so many who are more sinned against than sinning? And where is true social service better administered than in the haunts of living death, where the charity and self-sacrifice of the heroic Father Damien of the lonely Island of Molokai, is still continued by the Sisters of St. Francis and the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart in caring for the lepers of the various races from the islands of the South Seas?*

A motive, divine like this, was altogether unknown in pagan times; so much so that, when Christianity first made its appearance, the pagan races marveled to see the Christians practice a virtue to them hitherto unheard-of. Wherefore they were wont to exclaim in wonder: *Vide ut invicem se diligant!*—"See how these Christians love one another!"

"Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself, with his alms feeds three:
Himself, his famishing neighbor, and Me."

* The writer on two occasions, 1918-20, conducted missions at the Leper Settlement in Molokai.

CHAPTER XV

The Gold of the Heart

Jesus in the city of Naim. He is invited to dine by Simon. Omission of the ordinary courtesies prevalent in the East. The tradition concerning the Magdalen. The individual seldom represents a class. Reasons that led Magdalen to Christ. The miracle at Naim. Christ present at the banquet. The Magdalen enters. Customs that obtained at Eastern banquets. Magdalen's supplication. Simon's complaint. Dialogue between Christ and Simon. Magdalen's conversion. Her love and forgiveness. Mild doctrine of the Church towards sinners. Scriptural examples of forgiveness. Does God forgive our sins? Christ's consoling message to Magdalen.

ACCORDING to a well-authenticated tradition, it was while Jesus was staying in the city of Naim that He received and accepted an invitation to dine at the house of Simon the Pharisee. We are not informed as to what led up to the invitation on the part of the host; however, it is not at all unlikely that Simon, hearing much of the magnetic personality of the Savior, thought that some notoriety might, perhaps, come to himself by inviting to his house the Prophet so long and anxiously expected in Israel. Up to this event there had been no open rupture with the Pharisaic party. One thing, however, seems quite certain, as circumstances of later development will prove—this invitation and hospitality on the part of Simon the Pharisee was meant to be qualified, and condescending to the new Prophet, his distinguished guest. The usual courtesies ordinarily extended to guests were purposely omitted; there was none of that gracious attention to procure fresh water for the sandaled feet; the conventional kiss of welcome on the cheek was not given;

there was no precious ointment for the head. In fact, nothing was done, barring the gracious formality of seating a guest at table; and all this was so arranged that the guest Himself might realize the condescension of His host in extending the invitation, that He should feel honored in being present at Simon's banquet.

The woman whose presence is to figure so prominently in this parable is known by the conventional title of "the sinner of the city" (Luke 7:37). Her name, out of a refined delicacy of feeling, is suppressed by the Evangelist; but a well-received tradition tells us that she was the sister of Lazarus and Martha, whose dwelling was at Bethany. The tradition also says that the woman here described as *a sinner* is Mary of Magdala, better known as Mary Magdalen, who, from the time of her conversion, became, like her brother and sister, very dear to Jesus Christ. St. John says: *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus* (John 11:5).

Concerning her early life very little indeed is known, save the tradition which, coming down from the Talmudists, says much of her surpassing beauty, her wealth of luxuriant hair, and the somewhat questionable manner of her life. It seems she was allured away from home at a tender age shortly after the death of her mother. Then she married a certain Pappus, a doctor of the Law, who, growing extremely jealous of her, eventually separated from his beautiful young wife. Her life now blighted, and deprived of that natural affection which her nature craved, she was easily led astray by one Pandera, an officer of the Roman Legion then garrisoned at Magdala. What this tradition, aside from the authority of the Talmud, may be worth we have no means of knowing with reliable certainty.

Neither is it quite clear, in the Gospel account, how Magdalen first became acquainted with Jesus, for, ordinarily speaking, the two should never have met, as they belonged to the two opposite poles of social life. If we look upon Christ and the Magdalen as the representatives of a class and consider class distinction alone, the meeting in the house of Simon should never have taken place. Christ stood for the perfect observance of all of God's laws. The Magdalen typified their most flagrant violation. We must remember, however, that no one individual strictly represents a class; and, moreover, that Christ did not deal so much with class distinction as with the individual. The class may be good while the individual is just the reverse; of this there is no lack of evidence in everyday home life. The apostles, as a class, were truly good, though one of them was so completely perverse that we do not care to think of him.

The Magdalen had doubtless heard much about the youthful Prophet before He came to the city of Naim, as the fame of His preaching and miraculous powers had by this time reached from end to end of Palestine. It was in Naim, moreover, that some of His greatest miracles took place. His voice was heard proclaiming in its streets: *The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the Gospel is preached* (Luke 7:22). Once it happened that, while a funeral cortège was passing by, bearing to a premature grave the only son of a poor Galilean widow, the heart of Jesus went out to the sorrowing mother; and upon touching the bier, forthwith His power called back the spirit of life, and the young man rose from the sleep of death to gladden the heart of his afflicted mother. The Naimites rushed through their narrow,

winding streets, exclaiming: *A great Prophet is risen among us; and God hath visited His people* (Luke 7:16).

It is not at all unlikely that Magdalen was nigh to the city's gate when Jesus wrought this astounding miracle, or it may have been that she heard one of His soul-appealing sermons on divine mercy, which touched her heart to its very depths. It may be, too, that those tender words: *Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. 11:28), in some way fell upon her ear; or she may have heard Christ relate the parable of the prodigal son. Whatever it was, we know not; all we do know is that her heart was moved by some stirring appeal of divine grace; and being ready to co-operate with it, she took advantage of the first opportunity of seeking the new Prophet to confess her guilt and ask His mercy and forgiveness.

In the little town it was bruited about that the Prophet was invited to dine at the house of Simon the Pharisee. The Magdalen, picking up the rumor from the gossip that was passed along, hurried thither, attired in her usual costly garments; and taking with her an alabaster vase of exquisitely rich perfume, she entered the house of Simon.

The manners that obtain at festive gatherings in the East are very different from those in vogue with us of less ardent temperament. There it was the custom, when entering the house as a guest, first to remove the sandals, almost as we remove our hats, and to leave them in the vestibule. The head of the family then kissed his guest upon the cheek, saying to him: "Peace be to you!" He then escorted him to a seat, where servants came at once to bathe his feet. This being done, a special servant, or the master of the house himself, anointed with fra-

grant oil the hair and beard of him to whom the welcome was extended.

It was likewise their custom, as soon as the banquet hall was thrown open to the invited guests, for a crowd of onlookers, coming through curiosity, to surround the feasters with perfect freedom. In the time of our Lord the Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, took a reclining posture at banquets. They were seated on couches or settees arranged on three sides of low, square tables, leaving the fourth vacant for the convenience of the servers. Having slipped off their sandals on their entrance to the house, the chief servant placed the guests at table, where they took a reclining position, resting their feet on the outer extremity of the couch, so that a stranger coming in could take a position at the feet of a guest and not attract his attention.

Into this festive gathering of specially invited guests, the richly draped form of a well-known figure was seen crossing the threshold of the brilliantly lighted banquet hall. Pressing her way through the crowd of onlookers, she braved the scorn of the Pharisees, the sneers and smiles of the aristocracy, the ribald jests of the common herd; and coming to the couch where Jesus was reclining, she knelt in silent prayer, completely absorbed in the humble supplication of her anguish-stricken soul. What her thoughts then were may be better conjectured than expressed; at all events, having found the object of her quest, and touched by His gentle kindness, she pleaded in the depths of her heart for His mercy and forgiveness. She meditated on all that He was, and on all to which she herself had fallen—there was the immaculate, peerless purity of the Christ, and there, in such awful contrast, was the world's conventional type of a sinful

MARY MAGDALEN AT THE FEET OF JESUS

woman (Luke 7:37). Should we wonder that this contrast filled her heart with a sense of shame?

In this attitude of soul-piercing humiliation, from the full fountain of her heart came the unchecked stream of sorrow—warm, contrite tears, falling fast on the unsandaled feet of Christ; then, disheveling her wealth of rich, luxuriant hair to wipe them, after devoutly kissing them, she broke the alabaster vase of precious spikenard to anoint those beautiful feet with its sweet, aromatic perfume. Poor Magdalen! Perhaps, more sinned against than sinning, her noble heart could not endure the stiff, icy-cold treatment Jesus was given at the banquet, and this was for her all the greater reason to perform her heroic act of penance. In her inimitable way she made full satisfaction for the base neglect of the honors due to such a distinguished guest.

The most striking characteristic of her conversion is her deep humility. Truth has fully taken possession of her soul, for humility is truth, and it is truth in a very telling way. She is now sensible to the most delicate touch of the enormous debt that rests on her soul because of sin, and the realization of her inability to pay what she owes (Luke 7:38) is for the moment a weight crushing her very soul. For a woman to appear in such an attitude, with hair undone, was reckoned among the Jews as one of the most trying humiliations. In her sex homage can find no lowlier tribute to offer. Contrition can no farther go. The most precious aspect of her conversion was her love, as our Savior Himself points out (vs. 47). It is a love of contrition for her errors, and for her wandering away from the Supreme Good. But now having found this Good, she submits to it and embraces it with her whole heart. It is a love of the most heartfelt

gratitude for the gracious reception which held out to her the prospect of forgiveness of her sins, or for other benefits, such as deliverance from the power of the devil (Mark 16:9).

But the sight of the converted penitent, the humiliating posture she assumed, the great flood of her contrite tears, the sacrifice of her fragrant perfume only steeled the heart of Simon against all sympathy and revealed his character in its true colors. In that proud, callous soul it aroused only this unkind, rash reflection: If this man were a prophet, surely he would have known *what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner* (Luke 7:39). And did he know, why then, of course, he should have repulsed her with scorn, as he himself surely would have done.

Simon, absorbed in his own thoughts, was taking himself, like most men of his type, for a shrewd and keen observer, a man who could not only see things but could also see into things. He doubtless had his own idea of a prophet, and probably a very high idea. He was shocked to see his chief guest encouraging this sinful woman's intrusion, even permitting her to touch Him, when, according to Pharisaical observance, her least touch was a defilement that necessitated at least a ceremonial quarantine for his whole household. Then he jumped to the conclusion that this Rabbi, so much talked of, could be no prophet, and far less the Great Prophet who it had been foretold was to come to Israel. Simon was sufficiently master of the situation not to utter his unkind thoughts aloud, but not sufficiently master of himself to hide the stony feelings that revealed his icy dislike and disapproval; these he took no pains to disguise. While all this was turning over in his mind, his invited

guest was also doing His own thinking; nay, He read the very soul of His host through and through, though the latter was totally unconscious of the process at work in the divine mind, and, of course, quite unprepared for the stern, unexpected lesson now about to come.

Poor Pharisee! "If He knew," he said, musing to himself. But Christ did know; knew all along what was taking place at His feet, though, apparently, He took no notice of it. There are times when silence is golden, even in no less a person than the Son of God. In the most momentous hour of His life, before Pilate, the Gospel says: *Jesus held His peace* (Matt. 26:63). Now He is biding His time for the moment when silence is no longer a virtue; when the scene is set to teach mankind one of the most sublime object lessons of love and mercy that an erring world shall ever know.

The Prophet from Nazareth will now teach His host, and incidentally ourselves, the lesson taken from the beautiful parable of the Two Debtors. The Master, always courteous, will not blurt out the parable of rebuke without the formal permission of His host. This is merely a little detail, and, to all appearances, a very trifling one; yet it is the finest mark of a gentleman who possesses innate refinement with thoughtful consideration for the feelings of others.

Simon, said our Lord gently, *I have somewhat to say to thee . . . Master, say it* (Luke 7:40), was the quick reply. *A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most?* (vs. 42). To our Lord's gentle question there can be only one answer, and that, after a fashion of assured indifference, Simon

gave correctly, saying: *I suppose that he to whom he forgave most . . . Thou hast judged rightly* (vs. 43), said our Lord; and now Simon has to hear the quite unlooked-for application.

Simon, dost thou see this woman? (vs. 44). Surely he did, though it is unlikely that he saw the point in the parable until its analysis revealed the striking contrast between the self-condemned Magdalen and the self-righteous Pharisee. Then, resuming the character-searching analysis, the Master continued: *I entered into thy house, and thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less* (vss. 44-47). And then, like a harmonic blend in the final strains of a touching melody, He turned, no longer to Simon, but to the sorrow-stricken penitent, telling her soul in words sweeter than any music ever known: *Thy sins are forgiven thee* (vs. 48).

In the character-analysis made of the Pharisee by his distinguished guest, the lesson taught to Simon was not meant for his benefit alone: incidentally, it covers the whole range of social affairs. *I entered into thy house, and thou gavest Me no water for My feet.* Arriving at the end of a journey, after pacing the dusty road with sandal-shod feet, the traveler would naturally appreciate the service which, in the East, was usually attended to by the slaves of the household; but such courtesies were not thought of for the Prophet of Nazareth; He was not

of the aristocracy, because He belonged to the industrial class; hence, in His condition, the minimum of social service was quite sufficient.

Are not our faults of omission, perhaps, the most difficult to repair? And our ever-ready excuses! Are they not the lame subterfuges for our bungling discourtesies? Water was surely common and cheap enough, though none was brought for Simon's guest; but the woman gave of her tears, which St. Augustine calls the blood of the heart; and such tears cannot be bought with gold. Here was the contrast analytically made between the woman and Simon, portraying their respective characters, much to the latter's disadvantage. Neither would Simon prepare the sweet-scented perfume for anointing the hair of his guest, though he well knew of the time-honored custom when guests of distinction were invited to dine in the East.

To us, so far removed from the original setting of the Eastern scene, all this may appear trivial, but to our Lord, who *hath done all things well* (Mark 7:37), nothing is trivial, even though in His eyes water may not be cheap nor precious ointment costly. For slave-service attention He surely was not looking; it is, however, mostly in little attentions that the heart of man is revealed, and the hidden symbolism which inspires such courtesies means much more than their external formality.

Such contrasts have chastening effects; they serve to disclose the seamy side of one's character. Simon looked upon himself as a righteous Israelite, and hence in no way approved the intrusion of his unwelcome visitor; and yet whatever historic renown he now has is due to her whom he superciliously frowned upon in presence of his invited guest. He, little suspecting the sublime spiritual

heights to which she soon would rise, saw in the Magdalen only another of the unlovable type of outcast, fallen women.

We should ever remember that, just as God creates each individual soul, so does the Christ deal with each soul individually. He deals, moreover, with the individual as he now is, and not with the individual as he has been in some period of his past. This lesson is important to remember in dealing with timid souls. The Church, ever guided by the Holy Ghost, makes use of this sane principle of mild asceticism: *Not as they once were, but as they now are,* when dealing with penitents in the sacrament of penance.

There is indeed the danger of spoiling God's work through over-righteous indignation, as if the insult resultant from sin were done to man, and not against the God of love whose mercy is above all His works. We are inclined to moralize, and say: "But there is the sin!" Yes, but that is not all. There is also the pardon! And with God, the pardon of sin means not only to forgive, but, better still, to forget.

Man finds it hard to forgive even, and it is almost practically impossible for him to forget. For this very reason it is but natural that a lurking misgiving should almost always haunt his repentant spirit: "God can forgive, yes, but oh! . . . will He also forget?" Wherefore has God, so to speak, almost exhausted human language to show the sinner how ready and willing He is to forgive and forget the dark side of his life the moment that the soul turns to repent. Such misgivings are indeed natural on the part of man in dealing with his fellow man, and should occasion no surprise, for it is of a piece with that other doctrine of Christ which says: *With men this is*

impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26). *If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool* (Isa. 1:18). *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you* (Ezech. 36:26). *He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea,* says the prophet Micheas (7:19).

Such, then, is the language of Holy Writ, wherein God shows how He not only forgives, but also wishes to forget our sins. He requires even of man to pardon seventy times seven times. And the heart of God! How great are its mercies! Without limits! Too easily do we forget the immeasurable distance that stretches between the actions of man and those of God. Man forgives because God has made it the measure of the divine forgiveness; but to find a man who also forgets an injury is a deal more than an ordinary occurrence. "To err is human, to forgive divine." To forget! *With men this is,* perhaps, *impossible, but with God all things are possible* (Matt. 19:26)—and if all things, then surely, the merciful oblivion of the stains that once marred, ruined, and almost completely wrecked His divine masterpiece.

If the sins are not to be forgotten, why did Jesus say to the Magdalen: *Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace* (Luke 7:50)? Surely there can be no peace in a heart that is oppressed by the bitter memories of anxiety about the past. Our Lord meant us to know that forgiveness on His part will include even more than we ourselves could ever fondly wish; and that our memories, if they must go back into the shadows of the sinful past, should dwell only on a softened and chastened recollection of what once was—darkness in spiritual death—now light in supernatural life.

If the anxious question should ever press home with crushing desolation, concerning the reality of the past or the uncertainty of the future, read your answer in the parable of the Two Debtors; and the Magdalen will tell you that in Christ she found a Friend who never rebuked her for the past, but a Friend who stood by in time of need and who, on one notable occasion, went so far in her defense as to prophesy that wheresoever His Gospel should be preached her acts of devoted kindness to Him should be told for a memorial of her (Matt. 26:13).

"When Magdalen with burning love
Broke at Thy Sacred Feet
Her vase of alabaster rare
All filled with ointment sweet,
They murmured saying, 'Why this waste?'
But Thou didst take her part.
Her costly gift was naught to Thee,
But much her loving heart.
O let me break my poor life's vase
In love at Thy dear Feet.
And may the broken fragments yield
To Thee a perfume sweet!"

CHAPTER XVI

Doctors in Israel

The office of the scribe. His wisdom proverbial. The apostles the true scribes. Their office in the Church. Significance of *I am with you.* The apostles well prepared for their arduous mission. Rome in the days of the apostles. Their reception in the pagan world. Persecution of the first Christians. Permanency of Christ's Church. Testimony of Dryden.

IN order to get at the precise meaning of the "scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven," it will be apropos of the present parable to go into some explanation of the office which the scribes held in the Jewish temple in the days of Christ. Being the learned officials in matters pertaining to Church and state, they were a very influential class among the Jews; consequently they were consulted on all important matters relating to history and the Law of Moses. Mention is made of the scribes during the reigns of David and Solomon, and in the days of the Prophets Jeremias and Isaias they were connected with the office of numbering the military forces of the nation. Their principal care, however, was the preservation of the sacred books, the laws, hymns, and the prophetic sayings of the divinely sent prophets.

The training of a scribe commenced at the early age of thirteen and was kept up in the rabbinical schools of Jerusalem until the mature age of thirty, when the candidate was admitted to the duties of his office. The presiding rabbi pronounced the formula: "I admit thee and thou art admitted to the chair of the scribe." With this legal ceremony the scribe was ordained with the imposition of hands, after which he was given as the

symbol of his office tablets on which he was to note down the sayings of the wise, and the key of knowledge with which he was to open or to shut the treasures of divine wisdom.

The wisdom of the scribe had passed into a proverb (Eccles. 38:25; Jer. 8:8; Matt. 13:52). Herod consulted them as to the birthplace of the Messias; the Jewish people quoted their teaching as to the coming of Elias (Matt. 17:10).

The scribe was, therefore, the transcriber and interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures. After being installed in his office, he began by merely copying accurately the most approved manuscripts. So conscientiously did he acquit himself of his task that he knew the number of letters contained in each book, each chapter, and each verse. Not even *one jot or one tittle* (Matt. 5:18), to quote the Sacred Text, escaped his observation; and to this scrupulous care of the ancient scribes are we indebted for the preservation of the primitive text.

After the return of the Jews from captivity, the influence of the scribes became notably increased under the leadership of Esdras, the great-grandson of Aaron, who inherited from his forefathers the supreme honor of the sacerdotal dignity. Because of his remarkable learning he was renowned as a scribe, as he was for his illustrious descent. *This Esdras went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the Law of Moses* (I Esd. 7:6).

Because of their acquaintance in transcribing the sacred manuscripts, the scribes readily became experts in the study of exegesis, which, in time, qualified them for the doctorate; hence they were styled Doctors of the Law. Finally, on account of the deference shown for their learning, they monopolized the teaching authority

of the rabbinical schools, constituting themselves successors to the prophets and the interpreters of the Law of Moses. Wherefore did Christ warn His disciples: *The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not: for they say, and do not* (Matt. 23:2-3). Many of the scribes were Levites and most of them were of the Pharisees; but they were not necessarily ordained to the priesthood, neither were they taken from any particular tribe nor chosen from any one sect.

From the historical digest here given of the official status of the scribe, we can readily understand the pointed meaning in our divine Lord's words when He addressed His apostles in the present parable: *Every Scribe Instructed.* These words throw a new light on the parables thus far explained. Now it is no longer a material object lesson that is presented by Christ, but it is rather a consequential inference that must be drawn from the manifold lessons given in the parables that thus far have preceded. Like the final conference in a course of lectures, our Lord said to them: *Have you understood all these things?* They say to Him: Yes! *Then He said to them: Therefore every Scribe instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a man who is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old* (Matt. 12:52).

It goes, then, without saying that these words of our Lord pointed directly to His apostles and to those who were to succeed them in the apostolic ministry as the Scribes Instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is likewise evident that the instruction He had hitherto given to the apostles was deemed by Him sufficient to qualify

them for the office of teachers in the messianic kingdom. Since they understood the lessons contained in the preceding parables, and would, in the near future, be in a position to make good use of them for the benefit of others, their knowledge is compared to the stores of a provident householder, which are brought forth now and again according to the necessity of time and circumstance. The householder supplies the needs of his dependents with various commodities, new and old; it is now one thing, and now another. The well-instructed teacher likewise knows how to prepare his lessons in such a way as to make them acceptable; and having the skill to combine new things with old, he knows also how to use them to advantage by comparing one with the other in such a manner as to illustrate his doctrine by comparing their respective values.

Such is, then, the status of the true scribe—to be able to use the old and the new in imparting the knowledge of Christ's kingdom. For this reason did the Master, Christ, instruct His apostles in becoming efficient teachers by means of the parables; and if, perchance, any of these were obscure to them, or in any manner liable to be misapplied or misinterpreted, He Himself gave the true sense by making the explanation clear. Not content with this, He further made a promise that, when He returned to the Father, He would send them the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, that He should abide with them forever, to teach them all truth and bring to their minds all things whatsoever He had commanded them (John 14:26). And when He gave them the command to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature, He promised them: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:20). This divine

declaration is truly indicative of the great purpose for which they were sent. He is sending them forth to preach to all men the full revelation made by God His Father; and, moreover, He most solemnly promises to be *with them* in this work.

Let us ponder awhile on the import of these four simple words: *I* [God] *am with you,* and their significance in regard to the mission which was given to the apostles. Doubtless they must mean whatever they meant to the people of the country at the time they were used. Time and again they occur in both the Old and New Testaments, and whenever we meet with them they convey but one precise and well-known meaning. They imply an implicit warrant on the part of God, a most special providence over persons and their interests, that men shall most certainly succeed in the undertakings to which they refer. In Genesis we read that it was said to Abraham: *God is with thee in all that thou dost* (Gen. 21:22). And, again, God Himself says to Isaac: *Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. And I will be with thee, and will bless thee* (Gen. 26:3). So, also, speaking through Isaias, God consoles Israel: *Fear not, for I am with thee* (Isa. 43:5). *When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee. When thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt and the flames shall not burn in thee: For I am the Lord thy God* (Isa. 43:2-3).

We find the same phrase occurring in the New Testament. Gabriel salutes God's chosen Mother with the same assurance of divine protection: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!* (Luke 1:28). St. Peter, also, when sent to Cornelius and his kinsmen in Cesarea, takes for granted that even the Gentiles are familiar with the ex-

pression and its bearing on what is connected with it. *Jesus of Nazareth,* he says to them, *how God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him* (Acts 10:38). The phrase occurs nearly one hundred times in the books of the Old and New Testaments, in contexts exactly like to that in which Christ spoke to the apostles, always pointing to a special providence resulting in success.

We find, moreover, in Holy Writ that, when God makes choice of anyone for a work of more than ordinary consequence which seems to be beyond the natural capacity of the instrument He has selected, He usually inspires confidence and guarantees success by this same expression: "I am with you." *Who am I that I should go to Pharao, and should bring forth the children out of Egypt?* (Exod. 3:11), exclaimed the Jewish leader. Moses halted when God appointed him their deliverer. But God said to him: *I will be with thee* (vs. 12), and with what marvelous results the history of the people of Israel bears eloquent testimony.

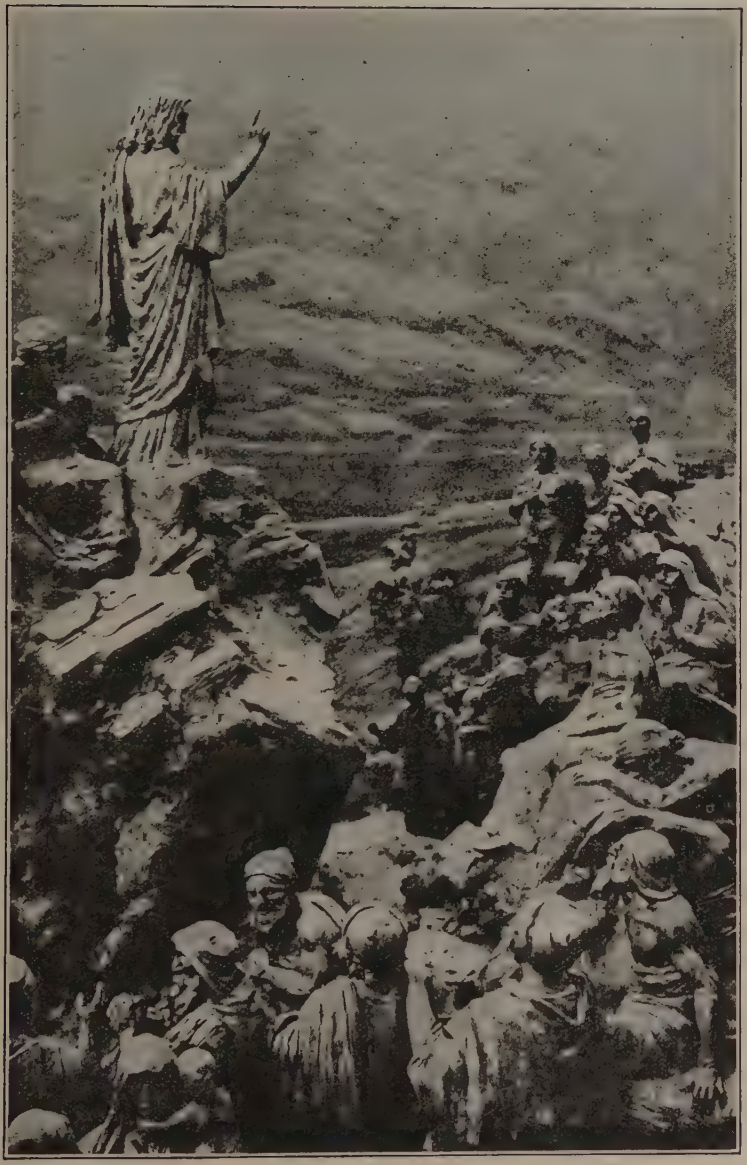
Further evidence would be superfluous, for nothing can be more certain than the invariable meaning in Holy Scripture, the language so familiar to our Lord and His apostles, of the phrase, *I, God, am with thee* (Exod. 3:12). It has a significance all its own of a special and efficacious divine assistance, which is all the more necessary when a commission that is evidently exceeding human strength is entrusted to someone. Then it bears with it a sure indication of infallible success.

Let us now study the import of the commission Christ gave to His apostles, and to which He annexed the promise: *I am with you all days* (Matt. 28:20). Read the

answer from the inspired page of sacred history: *Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you* (Matt. 28:19-20). There can be no doubt that this divine commission must be connected with a task of more than ordinary difficulty. No wonder, indeed, that Christ asked them in the parable: *Have ye understood all these things?* (Matt. 13:51). And when they answered, "Yes," we wonder still more if they had at that time even a faint intimation of the difficulties that were ahead of them.

Look at the magnitude of their enterprise! Consider the means at their disposal, comparing them with the means and methods that are considered necessary for such an undertaking from human standpoints, and see as you must what those well-instructed scribes were destined to accomplish. In their day idolatry and superstition were part and parcel of societies and kingdoms. So low had the morality of the nations sunk through the impure rites of pagan worship that to advocate the doctrines of Christianity was looked upon as an act of treason and of enmity to the state. Into the very life of art, sculpture, literature, poetry, and the drama, came, not only the innuendos, but the graphic description, of impure vice in its most insinuating forms. The ruins of Pompeii and the historic revelations of other corrupt cities describe—alas, only too well!—the moral depravity prevalent where the rites of religion were associated with vice; when even great philosophers considerd crime a worthy worship for the imaginary gods of the empire.

The practice was much worse than the theory, for the sovereigns of states not only permitted but even enforced their personal worship and deification. Neither was this state of universal corruption the accident of a day. It



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

had gathered and grown. For ages it was safeguarded by the majesty of law; it was honored by the sanction of tradition; and to such an extent that to go counter to it was looked upon as an attempt to rob the crafts and the fine arts of the very subsistence derived from their professions. Society was held shackled to the chains of idolatry and superstition; and so tight was the grasp, and so strong the hold, that even the most enlightened philosophers were powerless to break them asunder.

The scribes well instructed in the new kingdom of Christ were commissioned to go into that very society, then prostrate in the chaos of despair, and to make it realize that the past must be entirely changed, that a new order of things must obtain. Vice must be supplanted by Christian virtue. The passions of hate and lust must give place to charity and chastity. The lessons of the Sermon on the Mount must be made known to the entire world. The Gospel of Christ must be the new code of a nation's honor. Jupiter must fall. Christ must be exalted. The Roman eagles must be taken down from the Capitol and in their stead be uplifted the cross, the symbol of salvation, to bless with its hallowed sign the messianic kingdom of the Son of God.

By what authority was this unlooked-for change to be brought about? The authority was that Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, who was put to death on the Cross at Jerusalem, and who arose again from the dead. This very Christ claimed to be the eternal Son of God; therefore His word is true, and all men, Jew and Gentile, must acknowledge His divinity even on the Cross. What equipment did the Christ give to those scribes well instructed in His kingdom to bring about such a vital change?

They had received the Holy Ghost, *the Spirit of Truth to teach them all things and to abide with them forever* (John 14:17). But what was the marvelous method they followed that the Holy Ghost might work with them and in them? None other than that which Christ gave when He commissioned them to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature: *Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff . . . Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . They will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord* (Matt. 10:9-10, 16, 17, 22, 24).

And what happened to those twelve scribes? No sooner had the pagan Empire heard them than it persecuted them, crucified them. Then what happened? The blood of martyrs became the seed of Christians. Thousands of Christians took their places; and when they met the like fate, tens of thousands of other Christians replaced them. And so it went on! For, should one pastor be crucified, another with the same spirit, power, and title to the chair of unity will be elected, either on the shore of a lake where Peter received the commission to feed Christ's flock, or in some subterranean vault in times of persecution, as well as in the magnificent palace of the Vatican.

In the primitive ages of the Church when the Caesars, then masters of the world, after crucifying St. Peter and beheading St. Paul, exerted all their power against the faithful with more fury than against the barbarians who threatened to subvert the Empire, some popes were

doomed to work in the mines, others to feed and tend wild beasts for the diversion of the tyrants, and most of them were put to death. For the space of three hundred years, the steps of the pontifical throne, if a throne it could at that time be called, were crimsoned with the blood of its pontiffs. During the first three centuries thirty popes were put to death for the faith.

Death, caused by ill-treatment in captivity, takes away Pope Pius VI, in the beginning of the nineteenth century. He is followed by Pius VII, six years prisoner of Bonaparte in France. About the middle of the century Pope Pius IX had to flee Rome in order to secure freedom in the government of the Church. During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century and during the first quarter of this present century there have been six popes—Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI—and in that half-century, and up to the time of the present writing, only the last-named, Pope Pius XI, has appeared on the streets of the city of which he is the rightful sovereign. All this is but another proof that the Church founded by Christ does not depend upon riches, nor temporal favors, nor kingly power. Such was not the Master's promise; such would be unworthy of a God-Man, born in a stable to show us the way to an everlasting kingdom.

Now, as we look back through it all, through centuries of chaotic upheavals, turmoil, and strife—what do we find? The Caesars, at whose nod the world then trembled, are now no more! All the kingdoms and republics recorded in ancient history are today but so many wrecks of the Roman Empire which had swallowed up all others through the tyranny of those formidable oppressors. In the space of nineteen hundred years all these kingdoms

and empires have changed their laws, their customs, and the lineal succession of their rulers. Some have abolished royalty and taken on a republican form of government. Others, having overthrown despotic power to break the shackles of slavery, are became free states.

Looking back once more, through the dim vista of time, where to right and left we find the landmarks of history scattered along the highways of the ages, there is but one institution, and one alone, that survives and is permanent amid every variation and where all but God is changing. That one institution is the Catholic Church. Her pastors can prove an uninterrupted succession back to Peter, where the chain of religion is linked through the succession of the high-priests back to Moses and Aaron, thence to the patriarchs, thence to the first man, to whom God made the revelation of a Redeemer. The middle link of that unbroken chain unites the faithful of the Old and New Covenants, connecting the law of nature with the law of grace, and reveals to us the *Old and New* from the treasure-store of the Divine Householder.

The scribes well instructed in this kingdom combine the Old with the New. It is their perpetual treasure which can never fail. Instructed by such pastors, the Church shall ever remain infallible and invincible. She may be persecuted, but without danger of destruction, for to her alone permanency is promised. She will survive to see all kingdoms and empires buried in their own ruins; for all of them shall perish, whereas Christ has set no other limits to her duration on earth than the end of the world. This twentieth century, still young, will grow old and vanish into the past. It were idle speculation to ask the number of those to follow it, for we

know not. We who tread the earth's surface today have to play our little part thereon, finally to go beneath it, to mingle our dust in the course of time with that of the unborn millions who are yet to come; and yet the Church of today will live on. She will still live on till the foundations of the universe, shaken by a mighty power, shall tremble to their depths, till the last pontiff of that long and glorious line, kneeling on the ashes of a dying world, and stretching forth his consecrated hands to give back to Christ the keys of the kingdom of heaven, will proclaim that God's work is done, and then—the Church of the Gospel, the Church of History, the Church of Today, the One, True, Catholic Church, shall be no more.

The last trumpet shall sound, and the angel standing upon the earth and upon the sea, lifting up his hand to heaven, shall swear by Him who liveth forever and forever that time shall be no longer (Apoc. 10:6). Instead, then, of having my faith shaken by the vicissitudes of time, I will say with the immortal Dryden, who after deriding the Catholic religion from ignorance, embraced it from conviction:

"But, gracious God, how well dost Thou provide
For erring judgments an unerring guide!
Thy throne is darkness, in the abyss of light,
A blaze of glory which forbids the sight.
Oh, teach me to believe Thee thus conceal'd,
And search no further than Thou hast reveal'd,
But her alone for my director take,
Whom Thou hast promis'd never to forsake."

CHAPTER XVII

The Light of the World

Illuminating simile. Meschler's comment on light. Christ, the Light of the World, prefigured in the Ancient Covenant. The Evangelist's testimony to the uncreated Light. The Feast of Tabernacles—its national significance. The mystic candelabra. Jesus appears on the scene towards the close of the festive celebration. Testimony of St. John. The messianic declaration. Prophetic utterance of Isaias. Testimony of the Father. Christ's kingdom not of this world. Taxing problem of the Jewish attitude. The final appeal of Christ—His retort to the Sanhedrin. Attempt on His life—He vanishes from the Temple.

ALL the parables of the Gospel portray Christ as a Teacher sent out from God; for the multiude cried out: *Never did man speak like this man* (John 7:46). But His choice of the present metaphor, in which He declares Himself the Light of the World, has a momentous significance with a far-reaching consequence all its own. There is a meaning here not found in other parables. "In the whole visible creation," says Meschler, "there is nothing brighter, pleasanter, more beautiful than light. Light is good (Gen. 1:4); light is sweet (Eccl. 11:7); light gives beauty, fruitfulness in all things. Light leads and guides the whole multifarious life of creation as if by a golden bridle. The flowers, the clouds, the stars are lovely because they are robed in its beauty. And when, after the darkness of night, its rays once more fall upon the earth, there resounds from all living nature a chorus of rejoicing, as if the morning of a new creation had dawned. Without light, the visible creation would be but a world full of fear, of horror, of death."

Christ, the Light of the World, was prefigured in the Ancient Covenant to the children of Israel. *For the whole world was enlightened with a clear light; and none were hindered in their labors . . . They received a burning pillar of fire for a guide of the way which they knew not* (Wisd. 17:19; 18:3). A still clearer prediction of the future "Light of the World" was given in the age of the prophets: *Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light and kings in the brightness of thy rising* (Isa. 60:1-3). It was far off, indeed, when the illustrious Seer of Israel beheld in vision the effulgence of the divine light that dawned on the eternal Son of Jehovah by the hill-crest city on Mount Sion. That vision, however distant, was clear and full, for we read in the Sacred Books that the saintly men of the Ancient Covenant loved to see in this sign of hope the harbinger of an inevitable day. Their great patriarch, Father Abraham, longed to behold the fulfillment of the primal promise made to the first ancestor of his race; but, like all the rest who sprang from his illustrious lineage, it was not granted him to see it, save through the mystic symbols that revealed the Messias in type and prophecy.

How fortunate indeed are we! The blessed privilege is ours to be born in the better day. We have seen the prophetic vision realized, for we are walking, not in its obscure shadow, but in the full brightness of its noontide splendor. If the gleams of its distant rising so illumined and enriched those on whom they fell, so kindled the divine fire to purify the lips of Israel's prophet with burning zeal; then, indeed, are we favored to live in the effulgent rays of that celestial Brightness.

When St. John the Evangelist wrote his Gospel proving Christ's divine claim to the Godhead, he began with the idea of the uncreated Light dispelling the shadows that shrouded the pagan world in worse than Egyptian darkness. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (John 1:1-9).

The occasion for our divine Lord's utterance in declaring Himself the "Light of the World" came towards the close of His messianic mission. In truth, it may be called one of His notably significant pronouncements, because it was His first public proclamation that made known to the world His personal messianic claim. It was, besides, the golden opportunity given to Israel to recognize at last the Light Divine that shone in the midst of her obscure symbolism.

Jerusalem was just then celebrating the great national festival, the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the most gladsome of her public solemnities. The festival had been instituted as a national event, commemorating the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Land of Promise. Seven days were given over to festive jubilee, during which the Jews lived under leafy shelters, made in rustic fashion from the branches of trees, the olive and pine

and myrtle, and over them the spreading shade of the royal palm. These tents, representing the ancient tabernacles used by their forefathers journeying in the wilderness, were pitched all around the precincts of the holy Temple, where the children of Israel were assembled from all parts of Palestine to commemorate the waters of the miraculous fountain that flowed from the rock which Moses struck in the desert. Besides the celebration, symbolic of the mysterious fountain, they also celebrated at this festival the commemoration of the luminous cloud, the historic pillar of fire which guided their ancestors safely to Mount Sion.

Since this was the great event—the most notable for men of renown in their eventful history—to which reference is made in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, the dwellings throughout the country were brilliantly illuminated. In the court of the Temple, where the people usually assembled to offer their gifts, stood two massive candelabra, fifty cubits in height, and of exquisite, artistic workmanship, gorgeously gilded. The soft, mellow glow of their scintillating lights could be seen all over the holy city, whilst the festive participants danced to the music of varied instruments during the liturgical solemnity.

During the first days of the national celebration the absence of Jesus from the Temple had caused no little comment among the Jews; His presence was daily looked for, as it had been rumored that He was coming for the national feast. As we shall now see, He, in coming later towards its close, had a motive all His own which none else could then divine. Rumor was bruited about that the Nazarene had already entered the Temple, and the hurried whisper was passed among the crowds that He

was about to begin His teaching. Very many, indeed, had had personal experience, while others knew by hearsay, of the charm of His words; and so the crowd hustled and swayed, and there was eagerness and jostling in the endeavor to be near Him. Those pressing in from other directions tried to push their way through the circle which gradually closed in about Him.

The national celebration was almost over. Jesus, coming to the Temple, stood in the very court where the massive candelabra, throwing light pointedly prophetic of the solemnity, were yet standing. While the assembled populace in prayerful remembrance were now thanking the God of their fathers for His marvelous protection in the past and were humbly supplicating Him to hasten the dawn of the messianic light of the future (Zach. 14:5, 16), the ceremony commemorative of the luminous pillar drew to its close. The bright lights were extinguished with the final refrain of their national prayer.

When studying the divine allegories, we note that our Lord invariably suited the illustrations of His discourse to those external circumstances which He foresaw would elicit admiration and attention, and so impress vividly the truth of His doctrine on the minds of His audience. No other event more appropriate than the Feast of Tabernacles to give point to the leading theme of His messianic declaration could now take place.

The Evangelist says it was in the Temple and near the Hall of the Treasury that Jesus arose to speak. There, in its central court, within the shadow of the candelabra, with their mystic light gone out, stood the Christ, His face pale, like even to the shade of His snow-white robe, His dark eyes bright with emotion, wistful, looking out on the surging throng of the assembled of Israel. Sud-

denly a stillness passing strange seized the entire mass, reaching beyond until it held those in the booths and stalls of the outer court.

How often the prophets of the ancient Dispensation had gazed in mystic colloquy when, in those sublime visions from above, they had seen but the dim realization of this very day only through the veil of type and prophecy! Little aware of what was taking place at the close of their national solemnity, this throng beheld the nation's hope realized; but *the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it* (John 1:5). The Messias stood in their midst and they knew Him not. Our Divine Lord, taking advantage of the psychological moment in this impressive scene, now teeming with high significance, drew from the mystic symbolism of its solemnity the illuminating point of His messianic declaration. In the presence of the nation assembled, when for the last time the Feast of Tabernacles had a meaning in Israel, Jesus stood before them as the personal realization of its symbolic rites. Calmly and with that dignity which gave such power to His personal magnetism, a voice of marvelous sweetness, so pure, so musical and yet so strong, floated out on the evening air; the very breezes of heaven seemed to bear it reverently along, out into the Royal Porch, to the Court of the Israelites, till it penetrated even into the Court of the Sanhedrin. That voice came in tones of sublime and wondrous import: *I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life* (John 8:12).

A solemn claim, a sublime claim, an awful claim was His, and one which necessitated God's testimony and God's seal. That testimony and that seal God gave.

Doubtless there were various ways in which it might have been made known to the human mind that Christ's claim was true, but the one which God chose was that He should do the works that no other man had power to do.

Christ's words were so clear and so precise; His claim was set in terms that carried no misgiving; and the assembled multitude understood His declaration in the fullest sense of a divine messianic manifesto. Jesus, then and there, proclaimed Himself the supernatural life of man, the true, unfailing light, not only of the Temple and of the holy city, but of the whole world. How many of those present caught the full import of His divine claim is not for us to know, much less to decide; but this we do know, that the declaration He made at this memorable festival was unmistakably foretold and figuratively set forth in those wondrous Books of which the Jewish nation was in God's providence the faithful custodian. Time and again had the people of Israel listened to those inspired readings from their great prophets, telling them of the Light that was to come; and whenever they met for prayer or sacrifice, whether in their own native land, or in the shades of exile at Babylon, or at later times in the restored Temple on Mount Sion, the advent of the Light of the World was the burden of their prayer and song.

Listen once more to the telling force of the message of the evangelical prophet Isaias: *Behold, I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth. Thus saith the Lord the redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to the soul that is despised, to the nation that is abhorred* (Isa. 49:6-7).

He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12). Not only is He the "Light of the World." Nay, more! to those who follow in His illumined path, He promises the assurance of life eternal. This further assertion of the messianic claim, no less explicit than the first, had the effect of rousing the rage and malice of the Pharisees against Him. With one voice they exclaimed: *Thou givest testimony of thyself; thy testimony is not true* (vs. 13). Christ's testimony for them, in their attitude of prejudice, was worthless as evidence, because they said He gave it of Himself. No doubt they had in mind what is said in Deuteronomy regarding the testimony of two witnesses (17:6).

"How well," declares St. Augustine, "could Jesus turn their insidious retort! For light needs no testimony external to itself as proof of its existence; the fact that it shines is more than enough for the evidence of its light." Besides, this other fact, that the lights of the festive candelabra were extinguished before He made His solemn declaration of being the "Light of the World," was no mere coincidence, but the actual fulfillment of St. John's words, here enacted in a living scene: *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it* (John 1:5).

Darkness here is the darkness of error. *Having,* as St. Paul says, *their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts* (Eph. 4:18). Of this darkness did Isaias also speak: *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen* (Isa. 9:2).

CHRIST STILLING THE TEMPEST

But if they insist on having the two witnesses spoken of in Deuteronomy, Jesus, for the two and half years prior to this encounter with the Pharisees, had given unquestionable testimony of His messianic claims. He told them: *I am one that give testimony of Myself, and the Father that sent Me giveth testimony of Me* (John 8:18). Did not even the delegation sent by the Sanhedrin give evidence: *Never did man speak like this man* (John 7:46)? Did not the populace marvel at His divine power when they exclaimed: *Who is this . . . that both wind and sea obey Him?* (Mark 4:40)? Who indeed? Surely none other than that which He said He was, He who commands not alone the winds and the sea, but the very heavens and the earth, both this world and the next.

God alone could speak and do as Jesus did. God only is the light of life—in this world by faith, in the world to come by actual vision. He who dwells in light inaccessible can surely give testimony of what He knows about light. In His knowledge there can be no illusion; in His doctrine there can be no obscurity. His sinless life proves His claims; for He, alone among men, could utter that unique challenge to the Sanhedrists: *Which of you shall convince Me of sin?* (John 8:46). In confirmation of His own testimony, He could also add that of the Father who had sent Him into the world: *This is My most beloved Son, hear ye Him* (Mark 9:6), *and He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone* (John 8:29).

Having given complete proofs of His perfect holiness, His divinity, His origin (eternal generation in the bosom of His Father), He spoke finally of His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. He saith to them: *I go, and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin.*

Whither I go, you cannot come . . . You are from beneath, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world (John 8:21-23).

Notwithstanding, however, the absolute truth of all such divine credentials, the Jewish attitude confronts us with a taxing problem. How did the nation fail to discern the unmistakable tokens of Christ's divinity? We know from their history that for years before His coming, many in Israel were specially wide-awake to discover and welcome Him. Moreover, is it not practically unthinkable that, having such manifest evidence, and not one other rival claimant to dispute His right, yet, with the credentials about Him, He was not recognized? Nay more, when the supreme crisis came, He was summarily rejected by the highest authority known in Israel, the Sanhedrin. How could the Jewish nation fail to see the light which, like the dawn, shimmering over the dark background of her history, eventually shone with such translucent splendor in the heavens over Bethlehem? The reason is not far to seek. Israel, not only ambitious for her national supremacy but unfortunately led by dreamers who portrayed the future Christ as the King who would give the nation world-wide power outclassing all others in material splendor with international recognition, naturally looked forward to a Messias more of the character of a warlike general than a redeeming Savior. Surely when he comes, he must begin by crushing the imperial might of pagan Rome. So thought the Israel of that day!

When He did come, they watched Him; and when the opportune moment came, put the telling question: *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?* (Mark 12:14). Then He, requesting to be shown the coin of the tribute cur-

rent amongst them, asked: *Whose is this image and inscription?* (vs. 16). And when they replied that it was Caesar's, He said to them: *Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Luke 20:25). In their minds that reply stifled their national aspirations; His was not the type which Israel had sought; and hence they rejected Him. With telling pointedness did He say to them later: *I am come in the name of My Father and you receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive* (John 5:43). Here He referred to the Antichrist in the ages to come.

Blinded by the mists from their own clouds, they sought a material kingdom, when Jehovah promised them a spiritual one. What they dreamed, and above all the way in which they dreamed, was not to be. To all such pretentions there came ever the same answer, in fact, the only answer that could come from Him whose kingdom was not built upon the unstable base of shifting sands in a passing world. Wherefore did He say: *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36). It was the spiritual kingdom in the reign of the soul of which He spoke, the kingdom of grace referred to by His Precursor on the banks of the Jordan. *Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!* (John 1:29). For this reason He referred them to the testimony of John: *There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. You sent to John and he gave testimony to the truth. . . . He was a burning and a shining light; and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater testimony than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to per-*

fect; the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent Me (John 5:32-36).

For this reason also He told the Jews of His time that He was the way, the truth, and the life, not merely of their material bodies, but principally of their immortal souls; but, strange to say, the more the divine Leader revealed Himself to them as the spiritual life of the soul, the more maliciously was their rage and fury pitted against Him. Jesus saw clearly the hostility that was gathering around Him, the beginning of that persecution that would hound Him down like a hunted deer till His death in Jerusalem. His clear knowledge of that coming event deeply moved Him; and with touching appeal He gave voice to those solemn and parting words: *Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to Him that sent Me* (John 7:33). Inviting them to profit by such a tender token, He added, too, these other words: *You shall seek Me and shall not find Me; and where I am, thither you cannot come* (vs. 34). Under this veiled figure of His approaching exaltation in the glory of His Father and the happy destiny awaiting those who believed in Him, the Jews heard the final appeal which in that solemn hour was the final appeal of their God.

But it was far from having the desired effect in moving them to recognize the Messias. The obstinacy of their racial character revealed itself all the more in the irony of their insulting retort. *Whither will he go,* they said, *that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?* (vs. 35). And they, turning aside, muttered the words they had just heard, words in which their blind hearts could discover no meaning. Half a century later, when John described this scene, he saw Him whom Jerusalem and

the chiefs of the nation had rejected invading by His spirit the Hellenic world, those despised Greeks, those Gentiles of whom the fanatical Jews spoke only with contempt; and the doctrine of Jesus rang in all the synagogues of dispersed Israel.

His reproof now takes the tone of severity: *Because I say the truth,* He says, *ye believe Me not. Which of you shall convince Me of sin?* (John 8:46). Holiness of life is one of the standard guarantees of truth. No mere man can possess either absolute truth or absolute holiness; for he is indeed subject to error and may easily be deceived and by nature is inclined to evil, his will-power being often defective. Jesus possesses none of these inherent weaknesses of human nature; hence He solemnly asserts that every word He speaks comes directly from God His Father: *I and the Father are one* (John 10:30). For which reason He did not fear to fling in their very teeth this defiance: *Which of you shall convince Me of sin?* (John 8:46). That gage the Pharisees failed to take up. *And if I say the truth to you,* He continued, *why do you not believe Me?* (vs. 46). In a few precise words He gives them the reason for their incredulity: *He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God* (vs. 47).

These telling reproaches revealed the Pharisees in their true light, but hurting their national pride in its most sensitive point, incensed them all the more so that they gave vent to their satanic hatred by hurling in His face the racial insult: *Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?* (vs. 48), meaning that He was as foolish as He was wicked, since a Samaritan to the Jewish mind was not only a heretic, but above all possessed of a devil; he was a madman. Jesus answered:

I have not a devil, but I honor My Father and you have dishonored Me (vs. 49). *But I seek not my own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: if any man keep My word he shall not see death forever* (vss. 50-51). This last assertion they distorted into a material sense, saying: *Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest: If any man keep My word, he shall not see death forever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself?* (vss. 52-53).

Into the limitless past His eye now evidently looked, for He spoke of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was made; it scanned, too, beyond the ever-receding point which ends the past and begins the future, and infinitely beyond, even to the regions where time is not. For Him there were no secrets in this world or the next. The rewards and punishments for both were in His hands, and to whom He willed, and as He willed, He could dispose of them. *If you shall ask Me anything in My name, that I will do* (John 14:14). When the last cycle of time shall close in on its halting course, and the world's great drama shift its last scene on the stage of time, the legions of actors, who once played their parts before its footlights, must take their stand in presence of Him as their supreme Judge. In the unerring balance of divine justice, He it is who will decide the moral worth of man's thoughts, words, and deeds, from the first ancestor of the race down to the very man who, breathing the final breath of human life, has made his exit from the stage of time.

Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56). In this

assertion they recognized a formal reference to the messianic dignity. He gave them to understand that it was through Him the nations of the earth were blessed, according to the very words of the promise made to the Father of the Faithful: *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 26:4). That promise now realized in their midst, is fulfilled in the glory which Abraham beholds in the seed which he gave to Israel. Coarse and commonplace as ever, the Jews again interrupted Him with mocking scorn: *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?* (John 8:17). In the presence of such a venerable body of elders in the Sanhedrin, His youthful appearance must have been to them many a time a serious cause for surprise, just as it had been twenty years before, when for the first time He appeared in the Temple, hearing and answering the questions put by the doctors of Israel.

Human language is a medium to express what comes within the realm of human limits, the limits of time; now using such as could in some faint way put aside those limits and elevate the minds of His hearers to the one dread moment of eternity, which belongs to the infinite God, and to Him alone, He prefixed His answer with words of more than solemn import: *Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am* (John 8:58). Many then listening to Him remembered the passage in their sacred books where another also spoke of Himself as "I am," using those identical words denoting never-beginning, never-ending being. *I shall . . . say to them,* said Moses, *the God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is His name? what shall I say to them?* (Exod. 3:13). And the God of their fathers answered him: Tell them, *I am who am* (vs. 14).

Such were some of the occurrences which took place during the Feast of Tabernacles, such were the divine efforts made by Christ to soften the hearts of the Jews now hardening in the steel of awful sin. How profoundly beautiful the truth of His divinity shone forth in the mystic symbolism of their national festival! How mysteriously wise the words in which He veiled from this contentious and obstinate people the full revelation of His godhead, at the same time sounding the very depths of the profound mystery by the accuracy of His assertions and the precision of His words! He left nothing undone to give them with open hands the promise of salvation through the revelation of divine truths. All His overtures are met, not only by disbelief, but with scorn and mockery and derision, all leading to a further step to bring about His death. Very few believed in His messianic mission. The Sanhedrists are determined to reach the climax of their willful apostasy by rejecting the Light of the World.

Our divine Lord, seeing that He could no longer win by love and kindness, foretold the most terrible results of their infidelity, the punishment of not being able to find in Him a deliverer in their distress at the destruction of the city and Temple, their final impenitence in death, and their exclusion from life eternal (John 7:21-29). Stung by a prophecy in which Christ projected scenes gruesome with national ruin, the identical tragedy in which the Sanhedrists themselves would soon become the active principals, they have recourse to an act of violence. They go even so far as to make an attempt upon His life by picking up stones to cast at Him in the very precincts of the fore-court of the Temple. Their evil design His divine power alone could frustrate, for His end

had not yet come. However, He did not flee to avoid their fury, but mysteriously withdrew Himself away just as the light itself, which vanishes no one knows whither and can be neither seized nor stoned.

How truly Christ's prophetic words are fulfilled in all the generations of Israel, there is no student of history who does not see! To this very day the Jews dispersed throughout the world, as well as those now living in Palestine, are supplicating for the "Light of the World" to come and be their King. They shall seek and wait in vain for Him whom their Fathers rejected at the Feast of Tabernacles. Instead of following the divine Light, they prefer to grope in stygian darkness. But to all those who since have followed Him, Christ's words, "I am the Light of the World," are literally true and will remain true unto the final dusk of time, for He is the true Light of the World and he who walks in His illumined path shall have the light of life.

Should anxious worry or desolate sadness oppress your soul, all in the dark, as to what the future may bring, call with all your might to Him who is the "Light of the World." Say, if you will, with Newman—

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone."

CHAPTER XVIII

Lost and Found

The miracle wrought after the Feast of Tabernacles. The man thrust out of the Synagogue. Christ's occasion for the allegory. Pastoral life in the age of the Patriarchs. Shepherd life in Palestine. The sheepfold. The shepherd, the hireling. Denouncement of the shepherds of Israel. Mission of the Baptist. A modern experience in Palestine. St. Paul's grievance. His letter to the Philippians. Christ's divine and human knowledge. He is the true Shepherd. The type portrays His kingship.

OUR Divine Lord is now nearing the close of the third year of His public life. Multitudes from the most distant parts are daily assembled to hear Him, for His fame as a teacher had gone throughout the land of Israel. In the beginning of His apostolate the disciples gladly left their craft and nets at His call; and now crowds of thousands follow Him even into the wilderness to listen to His heavenly discourses. Virtue had gone out from Him. There was healing in the very fringe of His garment. The winds and the seas obeyed Him; even the very devils cried aloud and confessed Him. The Heavenly Father also gave testimony of Him in voices and signs from above. And yet there was a certain class who believed not, who through pride and hardness of heart explained away all the miracles that He wrought, or attributed them to the power of Beelzebub.

After attending the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn, He had performed one of His outstanding miracles by restoring sight to a man born blind. Although the Pharisees could not gainsay the authenticity of the miraculous fact, yet they refused to give it credence, and

drove the cured man violently out of the Synagogue. Such a peremptory ejection, intended, evidently, to discredit the miracle, and to impress the public with a display of their pharasaic indignation, justly aroused Christ and impelled Him to expose the malicious intent of those hypocritical shepherds. For a long time the ancient Church of the Covenant had been under the guidance of such pastors; now it is our Lord's purpose in the present allegory to note the contrast that distinguishes the false from the true shepherds in Israel.*

Though we cannot precisely state Christ's reason for making choice of one allegorical simile in preference to another, we feel certain that He invariably made use of such illustrations as nature offered for impressing a doctrinal truth on His audience. The allegory of the Good Shepherd was very likely suggested by the economic conditions that then obtained in Palestine, and especially in the northern and eastern districts. The tillage of large tracts of pasture lands for sheep-grazing had become one of the principal occupations of the inhabitants. In the age of the Patriarchs pastoral life had been held in high esteem; and we read that the Prophet-King, in the days of his youth, pastured his father's flocks on the upland slopes near Bethlehem. It may be, too, that this allegory

* In the twenty-second Psalm King David compares himself to a sheep, and the Almighty to a shepherd; a very obvious figure which every day occurred during his pastoral charge. The sheep, timid, defenseless, exposed to all the beasts of prey, and possessed of little knowledge or power of foreseeing or avoiding danger, are indebted for life, safety, and everything to the care of the shepherd. When we remember, also, that the exiled King had formerly himself been a shepherd, the recollection of his past life breaks in upon his soul: "Jehovah," says he, "is my shepherd, I shall want nothing." It is his province to care for my existence, and to procure for me those blessings which I am unable to obtain for myself. (Lyric Poetry of the Hebrews, page 288.)

was prompted by hearing the voice of a Judean shepherd calling out in stentorian tones the names of his sheep, as he led the flock along the hills from one place of pasturage to another. Barring this apparently accidental circumstance as Christ's motive in selecting the subject matter for His discourse, Holy Writ furnishes many others, of more than local interest, as the cause of His preferential choice.

In the ancient Covenant the people of Israel were accustomed to regard their divinely sent teachers as the shepherds of their souls. Thus we read in Isaias: *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He himself shall carry them that are with young* (Isa. 40:11). We also observe that in Scriptural language the people of God were frequently called the flock of the Lord (Jehovah). *For He is the Lord our God: and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand* (Psalm 94:7). We are told, moreover, that the Messias was to be sent as the supreme Shepherd of His flock. *I will set up one shepherd over them; and He shall feed them, even My servant David. He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd* (Ezech. 34:23).

For the clear elucidation of the allegory it will help, in no slight way, to bring to mind the custom that obtained with regard to shepherd-life in Palestine, and especially the significance of the sheepfold for the security of the sheep as well as for the convenience of the shepherds. This was a rudely constructed stone enclosure with thorn-bushes on top and surrounded with high palings to protect the sheep from the attacks of wild animals. There was one main entrance near which the gate-lodge, occupied by the fold-keeper, was situated. During

the day the flocks were separated and placed in pastures by their shepherds. In the evening they were all brought together and given over to the care of the herdsman within the common sheepfold. His office consisted principally in guarding the sheep against the attacks of wolves or marauders who prowled about at night, and in admitting the shepherds coming to the sheepfold in the early morning. They come at the break of day, rapping at the gatekeeper's door, and, upon admission, each shepherd calls his respective flock; the sheep, knowing his voice, follow him withersoever he goes; and while the flocks are browsing on the grassy hillsides by the meadows and uplands, travelers passing along the highway halt by the wayside to enjoy the sweet, mellow notes of the shepherd's flute as he plays to while the weary hours away.

To ourselves, nurtured in Western civilization and quite unfamiliar with Eastern manners and customs, it seems commonplace, if not rather strange, to study Christ in the rôle of a shepherd with a sheep as the tender object of His divine solicitude. To us the sheep is by no means such an interesting animal; to most of us a well-trained dog would mean so much more. Timid and shy in face of danger, the sheep is easily frightened and almost instinctively takes to flight; it possesses little of that animal instinct which approaches near to, and yet is so far from, intelligence, but which, being so remarkable in most other animals, has much to do with making them the more attractive. Other animals will without exception fight for life to the bitter end; the sheep yields so willingly and succumbs to death without an apparent struggle.

All these instincts, proper to the sheep, bring out all the more clearly why this animal was chosen as the fit-

ting complement to the principal Figure in the allegory. Our divine Lord would have us recognize the Good Shepherd in Himself; hence He designates the special characteristics that distinguish the false from the true, the mere hireling from him who is the true shepherd with a personal interest in the sheep of his own flock under the care of his pastoral charge. First of all comes the valid appointment which is given to him who assumes the pastoral obligations. This authority must be recognized by the gatekeeper before admitting the shepherd to pass by the open door to enter the sheepfold (John 10:2-3). The second, which is correlative to the first, is notably evident in the attachment of the sheep of the flock to their true shepherd; for, knowing his voice, they follow him to the pastures as he goes before them (vs. 4). In Palestine the sheep are so tame and well trained by the shepherds that they follow withersoever they are led with the utmost docility. *But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers* (vs. 5).

The false shepherd is distinguished by the very opposite signs. The first is the surreptitious manner by which he effects an entrance to the sheepfold; he does not enter by the door, but, operating in the dark, climbs over the wall, causing anxiety and consternation among the sheep, and leaves the flock in desolation and ruin. Wherefore did Jesus say: *Amen, amen, I say to you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber* (John 10:1). Many of the scribes and Pharisees were like such intruders who slipped into the sheepfold of Israel without vocation or mission. Their works proved conclusively that they possessed no credentials of a divine vocation

or mission from Jehovah; and so the sheepfold was often ravaged for their own personal interest of pride and ambition; so much so that the Lord complained through the mouth of His prophet: *Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat: but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand. And my sheep were scattered because there was no shepherd: and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep have wandered in every mountain, and in every high hill: and my flocks were scattered upon the face of the earth, and there was none that sought them, there was none, I say, that sought them* (Ezech. 34:2-6).

Jehovah in the striking imagery of Scripture likened the chosen people of Israel to a flock of sheep. Hear again the Prophet Ezechiel: *And you, My flocks, the flocks of My pasture, are men, and I am the Lord your God* (Ezech. 34:31). From this we clearly understand that the sheepfold was typical of the means of salvation in the ancient Covenant. The sheep typify God's chosen people; Christ Himself is the door and His heavenly Father is the door-keeper who guards the fold from the incursions of thieves and robbers, the unlawful pastors who force their services into the sacred precincts of the pastoral office.

Jesus says: *I am the Good Shepherd* (John 10:11). The true shepherd does not conceal his coming but openly announces his arrival. Christ's coming had been clearly announced in the ancient Covenant by the successive prophets in Israel from Isaias down to St. John the Baptist, who was specially chosen to point out the Good Shepherd to the Jews on the banks of the Jordan. *Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29)! The Baptist was the official porter of Judaism, who knew the true Shepherd by the signs which the Holy Spirit had given; and, solemnly opening the door before Him, he introduced Him into the midst of Israel to select and to organize the new people of God. Had the authorized representatives of the Synagogue but read the prophecies concerning Him aright, had they put aside their arrogant pride and envious prejudice, they could not have failed to recognize the true picture of Him who was revealed to their prophets in the ancient Covenant as the true Shepherd.

How well and true to life our Lord proved His title to the office of the true Shepherd! He says: *The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep* (John 10:11). It may be hard for us, so far removed from the land of Palestine, to grasp the full meaning of our Lord's words: that the Shepherd would give his life for his sheep or that he would even risk it for their safety in time of danger. Such a care for mere animals may indeed seem extravagant to us so unfamiliar with Oriental customs. Yet our Lord's words are strictly true. David thus describes to Saul the risk he ran in defending his father's flock: *Thy servant kept his father's sheep; and there came a lion or a bear, and took a ram out of the midst of the flock. And I pursued after them, and struck them,*

and delivered it out of their mouth; and they rose up against me, and I caught them by the throat; and I strangled and killed them (I Kings 17:34-35).

This care of the shepherd for the sheep of his flock as narrated in Holy Writ is still in evidence in recent times, for it has been truly said that the East never changes. A traveller in the Holy Land relates this account of the danger risked by shepherds in defending their flocks: "The wolf, the panther, the leopard come; the thief and the robber do their worst; and the shepherd has to submit to blows and wounds, and sometimes even to death. A poor faithful fellow last spring between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing actually fought three Bedouin robbers until he was hacked to pieces, and died among the sheep he was defending. I have repeatedly seen the silly goat or sheep running hither and thither and bleating piteously after the lost flock, only to call forth from their dens the beast of prey, or to bring up the lurking thief who quickly ends its cries in death."

But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep (John 10:12-13). A hireling is one who works for stipulated wages in the service of another. The sense, however, in which the expression must be rightly understood in the allegory, is that mercenary attitude which characterizes him who has nothing but personal interest at heart for the remuneration he is to receive in the service of his employer. In a word, he is merely a hireling and nothing more. He will do his duty, because he has to, but nothing else. He belongs to the category of "quitters" whenever

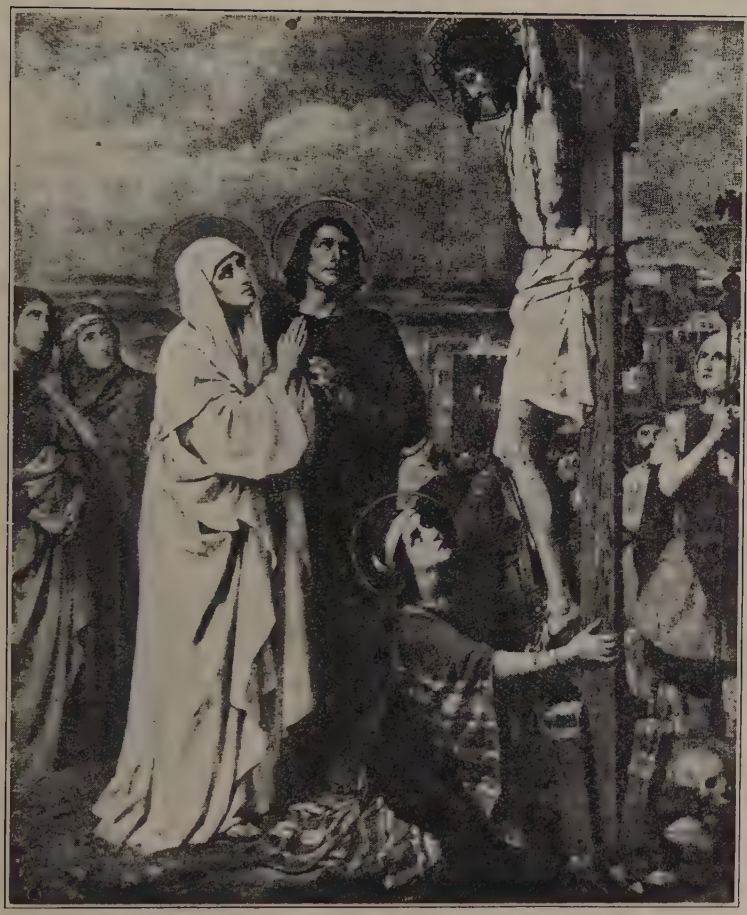
personal interest is concerned. True, he is not a thief or a robber, for they break into the sheepfold violently and without any authorization whatever, whereas the hireling is a legitimate shepherd in care of the flock, but will show himself in his true colors by flight when difficulties arise and danger threatens.

In his letter to the Philippians St. Paul complained of such hirelings in apostolic times: *I have no man so of the same mind, who with sincere affection is solicitous for you; for all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's* (Phil. 2:20-21). The flock with such a shepherd is indeed in a pitiable state. The wolf of modern paganism stalks at the door of the sheepfold; and the havoc which ensues is heartrending for the very reason referred to in the letter of St. Paul, when he sought a true shepherd to continue the work of his first Christian mission to the Philippians of Macedonia.

The real and lasting work of the shepherd today is done not only in the pulpit and in the other works of the sacred ministry, but in the classroom, and chiefly in the classroom of the parochial schools, where the lambs of the flock are trained from the beginning to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in His worthy representatives, the bishops and priests, together with the religious teachers who devote their lives incessantly to a labor of love which no hire can ever recompense. For this reason, too, did St. Peter, the Supreme Shepherd, write in his first epistle: *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily. And when the Prince of Pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory* (I Peter 5:2, 4).

I know mine, and mine know me, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep (John 10:14-15). Christ knows me as He is God. Here there is question of knowledge that is reciprocal between the shepherd and the sheep of his flock. It was this knowledge that urged St. Paul to exclaim: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross; and I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:19-20). Christ knows us from a dual source, as God and as man. He knows us accurately with that perfect knowledge which comes from the hypostatic union of His divine and human natures in the person of the God-Man. Because He is God and knows all things, He knows me as I am with the inerrancy of infallible wisdom, with the finality of unerring judgment. No knowledge of friend, howsoever intimate, nay, even my own personal knowledge of my own soul, can at all compare with the analyzing insight which He has of me; for between the Father and the Son there is the communication of the same divine nature, so that Christ could say: *I and the Father are one* (John 10:30).

He also knows me as He is man. We read of Him that He grew in age, wisdom, and grace with God and men. In Him we see represented the perfection of human nature. Before the fall Adam had a perfect knowledge of all created things, and the dominion of all things was placed in his power. The knowledge of Christ, as man, must immeasurably exceed all the high endowments of knowledge conferred upon the first man, for is He not the King of Angels? Hence His human knowledge must surpass that of all the angelic choirs of paradise. To His human mind are known the inward workings of nature and grace; yea, the most inward, secret thoughts of the human heart. Besides this superendowment of perfect knowledge, in-



THE CRUCIFIXION

separable from the perfection of His sacred humanity, there was the additional personal knowledge of His own experience which Scripture tells us He acquired as He *advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men* (Luke 2:52).

In return for this peerless knowledge which Christ possesses of all the sheep of His flock, they, in so far as human nature can ascend to the ideal, reciprocate by acknowledging Him as the Good Shepherd from whom and in whom they possess all that is precious and worth while. The distinctive trait of every good shepherd is to give his life for his sheep. This was the test to which Christ had clearly pointed; now He goes still further by actually giving example in the great school of mankind, fulfilling in His own person the exemplification of the most sublime teaching that man can ever know: *I lay down my life for my sheep* (John 10:15). *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb without voice before his shearer, so openeth he not his mouth* (Acts 8:32).

This is true of no other man save Christ, for no man has dominion over his own life. He said: *Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again* (John 10:17-18). Wherefore of Christ alone is the saying of the prophet Isaias true to its full extent: *By his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I distribute to him very many; and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he hath delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and he hath borne the*

sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors (Isa. 53:11-12).

Now we may begin to see and perhaps to realize, too, how Jesus as God and as man knows us. He wants us to see that He knows us as He is our Good Shepherd. Do we know Him thus? This knowledge must come through His Sacred Heart. *Behold the heart which has so much loved men!* It is the love of the Good Shepherd which tracks the steps of the missing wanderer through the weary "ups and downs" of life; until finally, driven by adversity, the stray sheep lost on the mountain permits the stalwart figure of the anxious Shepherd to lift the bleating, helpless weight to return with him to the ninety and nine resting securely within the fold. Such indeed is the true Shepherd of the flock, who, leaving the ninety-nine safely housed, sets out at dawn to seek the solitary sheep bleating upon the moors and wandering over stony waste. He traces the lost sheep by shreds of wool on brambles and thorns and by tracks of straying feet on soft clay and loosened stones until, exhausted and helpless, panting and frightened, the lost sheep is tenderly lifted by strong, loving arms onto the broad shoulders of the Good Shepherd.

How gently the Good Shepherd stoops! How carefully He lifts the burden upon His shoulder! How joyfully He bears it home, He, more than King, clasping it in the folds of His royal mantle! "Up He climbs over the brow of the hill, down through the waste, on through the pasture and fields, until draggled with wet, torn with thorns, mud-stained, blood-stained, panting with exhaustion, big drops of perspiration mingling with the big tears of joy on His face, His face transfigured with a radiance of rapture such as the angels have never known for joy

that the ninety-nine sheep were safe, the Good Shepherd stands. He has brought home His poor, foolish, lost sheep."

"For astray, behold
The Master leaves the ninety and the nine,
Nor rests till, love-controlled,
The discord moves in harmony divine."

What a contrast between the true shepherd and the hireling! And what a greater contrast between him and the thief and the robber! Of course there can be no question of contrasting Christ with the latter, but He Himself wants us to note the striking contrast between Himself as the Good Shepherd and the hireling. The hireling is not the owner of the flock, but Christ is the real owner of the flock of mankind. Wherefore He says: *And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd* (John 10:16). The sheep of His flock are not only the Israelites, but the Gentiles also. Now the whole allegory reveals the wonderful messianic mission of Christ to the nations of the world. In the entire compendium of Gospel-teaching there is no more consoling truth than that which declares Christ to be the universal Shepherd of mankind. He made it clear to the scribes and Pharisees, who wished to monopolize the kingdom of God for themselves, that the Gentiles would possess the inheritance of His Kingdom. *He chose us in him,* says the Apostle, *before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight, in charity, who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself* (Eph. 1:4-5).

That Jesus the Good Shepherd might accomplish this great union of all men represented by the two races, Jewish and Gentile, He freely delivered Himself up as a victim for the salvation of the world. *This commandment have I received of my Father* (John 10:18). *Therefore doth the Father love me* (vs. 17)—because I glorify Him by My death, by this union of the whole human race which shall eventually result from it. What a true picture of the hireling was presented by the Pharisees, to whom the greater part of the priesthood and of the leading circles of Israel belonged, as opposed to this touching and sublime love of the Good Shepherd, our Savior! "They did not exactly deliver the people into the hands of the Romans, but they incited them to fight against them, and when ruin came, they mostly tried to make their escape" (Schanz).

The teaching of our divine Lord in this allegorical lesson of the Good Shepherd is a vivid illustration of the pastoral office He came to establish among the nations of the earth. It brings before us, too, better than any other comparison, the true meaning of His messianic claims which portray Him as the supreme Shepherd-King who is appointed by His eternal Father to rule over all flocks and shepherds, and who will unite them into one true fold under His peaceful, pastoral staff for the one universal kingdom of grace and glory.

It is our great privilege to know the Good Shepherd and to belong to the sheep of His flock. He is our true Shepherd because He is our Lord and our God; and, in order that we may approach Him with filial confidence and love, He assumes the rôle of the shepherd to portray more lovingly His divine kingship. How strikingly He proceeds to unfold before us the qualities of the Shep-

herd-King in the peerless condescension of His Incarnation, in which He leaves the celestial companionship of angels and the throne of His Father's glory for the humble exchange of life in the obscurity at Nazareth! Then again in His public life, He reveals Himself still more tenderly and devotedly as the true Shepherd of our souls by going after the stray sheep of the House of Israel over vale and mountain until, tired and weary, He rests at the well of Jacob, where He enters into conversation with the Samaritan woman and reveals to her the fountain of living water to quench the thirst of her sin-laden soul. But above all He shows Himself the Good Shepherd by feeding our very souls with His divine life in the great Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is here indeed that He gives strength and nourishment, not only for the present life that now is, but likewise for that future life which is everlasting.

Hence it was that the thought of His bitter passion was ever before Him. Unlike the martyrs who gave their lives for Christ, and were spared the knowledge of the dreaded future, Jesus did not permit Himself that escape of future suffering. In the marvelous prescience of His divine nature the whole history of the closing days of His life stretched out like a detailed panorama before Him. Judas betrays Him. The chief priests, the doctors of the law, the elders of the people accuse and judge Him, Herod derides Him, the soldiers scoff at and ill-treat Him, the populace clamor for His death, the executioners crucify Him; all insult Him in that gloomy and solemn hour of darkness when the life of the most abject deserves reverent pity. Yet He never gave the least murmur of complaint, but remained meek and patient as a lamb in the hands of His slaughterers.

Not only were the martyrs spared all knowledge of their future sufferings and the torments to which they were ultimately to submit out of love for Christ; but when the hour of their supreme sacrifice had struck, they knew full well that there was no choice left except apostasy or death. The tempting bait of freedom was often set before them, but on condition that they would sacrifice to idols by placing incense in the censer at the shrine of a pagan deity. To avoid an eternal loss, they were under the strict personal obligation of enduring the extreme penalty. Not so with Jesus. Being a free agent, there was no external power to force Him. He could so easily have availed Himself of the power of His divinity to escape from His enemies. Wherefore He could say in all truth: *I lay down my life, that I may take it again* (John 10:17).

This was surely the most tender proclamation of His kingship. The king who rules by kindness, whose power of attraction is the law of love, without intimidating his subjects, is sure to draw them to himself. Such was the distinctive characteristic of the Good Shepherd. His human sympathy went out with love divine to console the hearts of the sad and the afflicted; He wished us to know that He loved with the full meaning of that enchanting word, love.

We are all ready to acknowledge the human nature in Christ, even though we know that, the Incarnation being shrouded so deeply in the mystery of the sublime, it is difficult to realize the thought that Christ loves each one of us to the extent of laying down His life. Yet this is what He implied when He revealed His kingship under the veil of a metaphor, the Shepherd safeguarding the sheep of His flock; the Shepherd going after the lone

sheep straying upon the moors; the Good Shepherd giving His life for His sheep!

"The Lord Himself, the mighty Lord,
Vouchsafes to be my guide;
The shepherd, by whose constant care
My wants are all supplied.
In tender grass He makes me feed,
And gently there repose;
And leads me to cool shades, and where
Refreshing water flows."

CHAPTER XIX

In a Far Country

A character-study of the attitude of the two sons. An ideal father. The younger brother. His selfish demand. Leaving for the far country. Points in his character. His dream of liberty. Into the far country. The nemesis of evil. Waste. Exhausted resources. Unsatisfied hunger. Spiritual destitution. The famine in the land. Degradation amid abounding desolation. The swineherd among the swine. Entering into himself. Conversion and repentance. The return and the reception. Forgiveness and rehabilitation. The promise of service. A banquet of rejoicing. The elder brother.

IN all the illustrations of the divine parables we invariably find one leading thought which indicates the high point of the narrative. The touch of the divine is felt in all, but in none of them is this divine touch so tenderly impressed as in the allegory of the Prodigal Son. The title is so well known, so often applied, that its mere mention is enough to beget in us the filial trust of confidence in God as our common Father. From first to last, the high point in the present study is that magnanimous disposition, so replete with loving kindness and tender mercy, that is set before us as a sure token that God's mercy is above all His works.

Since we make deductions from the constructive setting of the allegory by observing the principals in the circumstances wherein Christ has placed them, it is reasonable to infer that the prodigal was the younger son of a very ideal home, that he was blessed with congenial environs, where everything conducive to his weal was within his reach. It would appear likewise certain that his venerable father, fated to bear the burden of

filial ingratitude on the part of his unwise son, was an ideal type, one of those whom kind Providence had set over the paternal roof-tree. Be this as it may, without any fault of his, he is now forced to yield to the pressure of circumstances which in the unexpected contingencies that have arisen are apparently beyond his control. No mention is made of the youth's mother, wherefore we may reasonably presume that she was no longer living. This circumstance may have had something to do with his restless longing to get away and try to shift for himself; it has nothing, however, to do with the scope of the allegory, the high point of which is to focus attention on the father of the prodigal, as well as on the prodigal himself, in order that we, too, may be able to see for ourselves how ingratitude and selfishness are paralleled by love and forgiveness; and, in all this, to see myself and my Father—God.

The elder son, though brought up in the same environment as his younger brother, has acquired tastes totally different, due, perhaps, to his more even disposition. His is that type which, noted for shrewd perception and common sense, finds its contentment within the circle of the family household. For him adventure held no lure, neither had he a desire to give up the certain for the uncertain; hence, being uninfluenced by any allurement to give himself up to the gay life of the outside world, he was content to remain at home. The home atmosphere was sufficiently congenial for the development of his taste; for him it was a world amply large and live enough for his pursuits, and, consequently, his interest was centered there.

Being nurtured in the same environs, the like opportunities for the two sons were also theirs, but the net

results, all things considered, were so strikingly different. Not, indeed, that we wish to claim any special merit for the elder brother because he devoted himself to the management of home affairs, for this may have been in great measure the result of his natural disposition. Neither must we condemn offhand the bent of the younger brother in choosing to go and do for himself, particularly if the outlook were bright with promise fair. With him, too, it may have been the outcome of his complex character, for which, perhaps, he was not altogether responsible. What we wish to note, as deserving our attention in the allegory, is the attitude of the two sons and how they act in circumstances which put their dispositions to a test. Even though their innate propensities are markedly different, yet it is well to bear in mind that such tendencies are not in themselves either meritorious or otherwise, as they but serve to indicate points of difference in one's character which may either help or mar one's moral development according to the adjustment one gives them.

A certain man had two sons (Luke 15:11). In all likelihood there were no more sons in the family. The two represent the race of mankind—the just and the unjust. God is the universal Father of all. *And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me* (vs. 12). He asked for a third of his father's estate. According to the Mosaic law the younger son was entitled to one-half what the elder brother should receive as soon as he reached the stage of emancipation, though he had no right to claim it during the lifetime of his father. The young man, now longing to be his own master and chafing under the ordinary restraints of parental surveillance, deter-

mines to strike out for himself regardless of consequences, which youth, at his age, can seldom foresee. Unrestrained inclinations are now beginning to tell in his heartless conduct towards his father. The dream of liberty takes possession of his soul, he little foreseeing, of course, that unbridled liberty will sooner or later make him a slave.

We wonder why his father gave in to his demand: *Give me the portion of substance that falleth to me* (vs. 12); but since his heart was no longer with his father and his mind firmly set on going, there was practically nothing else to do. His was not the outcome of a moment's discontent, but the net result of a continued habit of grumbling dissatisfaction, culminating in a final breach of filial disloyalty. Since he will not make use of the opportunities at his own door, then the one thing for the young man to do is to cross the threshold of his own home and go out into the world where in a short time he will be taught many bitter lessons in the stern school of experience. So it is that God, who created man free, will not interfere with the choice of his free acts, but permits him to withdraw when no longer willing to yield the service for which he was created. God will not accept slave labor.

Doubtless it was with regret that the father noticed the sure signs of future revolt that were, from time to time, breaking out in the conduct of his son, conduct that was fast paving the way to later ruin; but it would not be to the honor of his household to detain him by violence; practically, we must say, it was not in his power. There was no other alternative for one long separated in spirit from home ties but to go whither the heart and mind had already gone. Thus God leaves

the sinner to the desires of his own heart. The Apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit ceases to strive against the violent demand of concupiscence; only the bitter experience of sin can lead back this foolish one later on. *And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense* (Rom. 1:28).

When the father saw that his son thought more of the portion of his inheritance than he did of himself, he yielded to his desire and gave it to him. When man's heart becomes alienated from God, He will not compel him to abide with Him. Holy Writ clearly tells us what will happen to those who force the fulfilment of their ungodly wishes. *If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies* (Eccl. 18:31). It may seem strange that we hear no mention of any attempt made on the part of the father to keep his son at home. Let us not forget whom this father is intended to represent. An earthly father, no doubt, might make use of some powers of persuasion to hold his son back; but in this allegory the father, who must unwillingly see the younger son go away, is the all-wise God, who will not interfere with the gift of freedom He has conferred on man's personal will.

And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country (Luke 15:13). One of the chief characteristics of sin is the selfish spirit that usually accompanies it. Well did he know that his attitude in demanding his portion was frowned upon by those who saw him going through the house ransacking for whatever he could lay his hands upon and which, by any chance, he might call his own. Surely he must have realized that his conduct was disgraced by selfishness and ingratitude; and no one can long think

of himself in such an unenviable light with any degree of satisfaction. But once a man is resolved to yield to his sinful inclinations, there is but a short interval between the temptation and the sin. There is an old saying: "The devil is always in a hurry." He tempts men to sin, but will give them little time for thought. The less we think, the more he succeeds. The more we reflect on our doings, the less he succeeds in his.

This selfishness of sin, and especially sin in its grosser forms, is very marked in the attitude of those who are "gathering all together" to satisfy their craving for unlawful gains, their thirst for pleasure, their insatiable greed for carnal lusts. Every noble aspiration must be sacrificed to meet the selfish demands which sin makes for drink and "dope" and riotous living. This characteristic is so impersonal that it spares neither health nor honor, peace nor joy, friends nor home; all must yield to its imperative demands, irrespective of consequences. Hence we find that the families of the rich as well as those of the poor, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, must pass through the fires of great tribulation while the selfishness of sin is reveling in the satisfaction of the most degrading passions. It robs the home of its joy; it brings the parents to untimely death; nor does it stop here. It carries the blight of depraved tastes and desires to children who have to face the battle of life with the awful handicap for which heredity is responsible.

"Measure thy life by loss and not by gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth;
For love's service standeth in love's sacrifice,
And who suffers most has most to give."

Another characteristic of the younger brother's attitude is his disloyalty to his father. After realizing the accomplishment of his desire in obtaining his portion of the inheritance, he was ready to put his plans into execution. In his mind this departure was no mere holiday adventure; he was going into a far country without making any provision for his return; his attitude is a desertion pure and simple. What he had resolved to do must be done quickly. He knew, of course, that his hurry in "gathering all together" betrayed his better self, but he felt there was no time to lose. His preparations were made, and go he must. Some final, touching words were likely spoken. The last farewell came in his father's embrace—and he was gone. His father saw him leave by the path turning the brow of the hill, where he looked after his vanishing figure while its faintest outline was yet visible.

He went into *a far country,* and *wasted his substance living riotously* (Luke 15:13). Eight words that graphically describe the conduct of the young man whose life in the far country has merited for him the title which mankind has given him for all time—The Prodigal. This *far country* must be the *terra longinqua* so often spoken of by the Israelites in reference to Egypt—the country whence they came to inhabit the *Land of Promise.* In all likelihood, it was for Egypt that the prodigal set out in his mad venture on the road to ruin. Alexandria, then in the heydey of her gentile corruption, was the populous metropolis where all tastes of licentiousness were gratified. It is, therefore, highly probable, if not certain, that the prodigal took sail on one of the many coasting schooners plying between Joppa and Naucratis, the near port to Alexandria, where he mixed in with its gay life, and was quickly absorbed in the heterogeneous mass of

the motley gatherings that crowded her pagan thoroughfares. It is likely, too, that news of his coming was passed around among those who, like parasites, are always ready to settle on their victims for spoil. A young man with money will surely find welcome among the social sycophants who cringe at the sight of wealth; and with a golden key in his hand there is scarcely a door that will not swing open before him. No doubt his new acquaintances were condescendingly kind. How they sought out his society and helped him—to waste his substance in the *far country!*

It would be difficult, indeed, to portray a picture more true to actual life than that which is done by the master mind of Christ in this allegory. The prodigal, so full of self-sufficiency in his own resources, has no thought of future reverses; but such extravagances as those in which he indulged are sure to hasten the end when he is least prepared to meet it. As a rule such spendthrifts are seldom conscious of the end which must await them. They are swayed principally by the lust of passion which, like a fever, consumes whatever energy their will power may yet possess; they are like the creatures of a day, content with the pleasures of the passing moment, but with no concern for its close.

It was in the *far country* that the prodigal *wasted his substance.* It is called *far* because it is far from God; His law was not in honor there. In Holy Writ the far country is spoken of as *the world,* not, indeed, the world in which we live, but that world of ungodliness which is alienated through sin from God. The phrase is used in a triple sense: (1) for the race of mankind, (2) for the planet in which we live, and (3) for that portion of the human race living a godless life. For that third world

it was that our divine Lord told His eternal Father that He did not pray; and it is in this last sense that we are to understand the world in which the prodigal *wasted his substance, living riotously.* He is now his own master, but that liberty for which he yearned in his father's house he cannot use as freely as he imagined. There is no one to lord it over him; yet there is verified in his case the truth of that line which the poet wrote, and on which so many, the poet himself included, have set their seal:

"Lord of himself; that heritage of woe!"

At last came the sad and awful experiences of the life of liberty in the *far country.* The world which had had such attractions in luring the prodigal away from home became a real disappointment when he came in direct contact with it. There is nothing more certain than the nemesis of sin; it carries, indeed only too often, its own scourge; and many a cutting lash it gives in the dark. To waste is to spend without return; it is worse when one's substance is wasted in the foul debauch of vice, for not only is there no profitable return from sinning, but the time inevitably comes when the sinner exhausts all the sinful satisfactions which the creature can give. The selfishness which gathered all has at length spent all, and riotous living ends in a ruined life when the craving for pleasure is no longer satisfied by pleasure.

"Alas! the joys that fortune brings
Are trifling and decay;
And those who prize the paltry things,
More trifling still than they."

And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want (Luke 15:14).

To add to his misery the whole of Egypt was stricken with famine—that awful scourge which periodically visited the shorelands of the Nile, when the waters failed to reach their accustomed height; or, as occasionally happened, when they did not rise at all. He never suspected that such a calamity would happen. Such an awakening could come to him only through the personal experience of being impoverished in the far country after he had lived in the home of plenty where even the servants had enough and to spare. It took this calamity to disillusion one who would not be disillusioned by anything else save the unexpected and in the unlooked-for way. Scripture says: *The harvest is the end of the world* (Matt. 13: 39), but are there not, at times, the ingatherings even before the harvest is finally reached? There are some who call in question the judgment to come at the end of the world, and treat it in the light of an academic discussion; but can they call in question the judgment that now is?

The prodigal at last realizes that unrestrained liberty and the sinful indulgence of depraved passions can end in nothing but unhappiness. In fact, it does not require any special judgment of God to bring condemnation on the sinner while he is rioting in the revel of sin; no direct interposition on the part of Providence is necessary. The calamity that comes with the breaking of the storm that bursts upon the spendthrift is the direct result of his own misbehavior, for he would not have been driven to such sore straits in the famine had he not wasted his substance and spent his portion in riotous living. The famine coming at the end of all his resources, when his substance was wasted, was a coincidence that was disastrously appalling. Had this famine but come while his

purse was full, he could have provided for the contingency; but it came in the night of adversity, when his friends went with his resources and there were none to help him. The crash came and he found himself a ruined man.

And he began to be in want (Luke 15:14). He could not be otherwise in the midst of gruesome desolation when the land was stricken with famine. But the prodigal had still one asset left—his liberty. It was for the sake of this that he had abandoned the paternal rooftree; and now, by the bitter irony of fate, by that mockery of independence which is the just retribution coming to sinful ingrates, his dream of liberty ends in the fetters of slavery; his prodigal spending has reduced him to beggary. There is no way of escape from the untoward events that now crowd about him; surely he must have given some thought to the scenes of home life, but not, however, with the idea of returning, for his heart was still callous and his will not yet gracefully subdued. Now, that he may not perish with hunger, he is going to sell his liberty.

"Yet round him hung invisibly a chain
Which gall'd forever, festering though unseen,
And heavy though it clank'd not; worn with pain."

And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country (vs. 15). This new feature of his sad experience would lead us to understand that the "citizen" in the *far country* was unwilling to engage the services of the dissipated stranger, and was, in a sense, forced to yield to his desperate supplication. The chain of adverse circumstances was fast closing in about the prodigal, but every link in that chain had been forged by his own making and linked together by his own free choice. The links

being now complete, his bondage of slavery begins. Forthwith he was sent into the fields to the degrading occupation of feeding and minding swine. It is hardly possible to conceive a more debasing servitude than that of a rich young Jew, once living in luxury, now forced by circumstances to take up the vile task of herding filthy animals. Herodotus writes that the swineherds were the only class of men against whom the Egyptians closed the doors of their temples. It was even worse than degradation for the Jews to be obliged to care for swine, for they were forbidden, from motives of religious tradition, to care for or to partake of the flesh of such unclean animals. Even in such a humiliating occupation the prodigal was so inhumanly treated that to relieve the pangs of hunger *he would fain have filled his belly with the husks* (carob-pods) *the swine did eat* (vs. 16). The same rough treatment which assigned him to such demeaning servitude was meted out to him on the part of the rest of the citizens of that country: *and no man gave unto him* (vs. 16), not even enough of such coarse food. The swine were more fortunate than their master; they were filling themselves while he was longing for the bean pods that lay in their trough.

The use of the word "filled," instead of "fed," is most expressive of the desperate condition in which the young man found himself. The food of swine might, indeed, "fill," though it could never feed man's needs; he was made for better nutrition than that which is thrown to animals. So it is in the spiritual life of man's soul. The "husks" of unbelief may apparently "fill," but they can never satisfy the spiritual wants of an immortal spirit. *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God* (Deut. 8:

THE PRODIGAL SON AMONG THE SWINE

3). What are the immoral and infidel books scattered broadcast throughout the land but the husks of swine, the garbage with which men fill themselves in the trough of sin after breaking with the faith that alone can nourish?

"Man is blind because of sin;
Revelation makes him sure;
Without that, who looks within,
Looks in vain, for all's obscure."

No wonder that insanity and the atrocious crime of self-destruction are so much on the increase when in the language of Holy Writ the number of fools has reached to infinitude, when they scream with vapid mouthings the foolishness of their foolish hearts: There is no God! *They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways . . . . They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together* (Ps. 13:1-3).

This denial of God leads to corruption of the heart with its net result, the works of abomination. Immorality is the surest path to infidelity and the most potent cause of imbecility. The despairing shouts of unbelievers furnish the unmistakable evidence that there is no exaggeration in the language Holy Writ has so warningly given to those who follow their passions into the *far country* of a godless life. Hear the wail of despair that comes from such men as Schopenhauer: "The life of the animal is more to be envied than that of man"; or of Caro: "The height of misery is not that of being man; it is being man to despise oneself sufficiently to regret that one is not an animal"; or of Voltaire: "I wish I had never been born." Surely these are the despairing cries of men who have experienced that "husks" may "fill," but cannot feed, the needs of the soul.

With masterly touch artists have produced a graphic representation of the prodigal in the slavery of a swine-keeper. The scene is laid in a landscape under a mournful sky in the *far country* of sin. He is seated alone on the edge of a projecting rock with the derisive sceptre of the swineherd in his hand. The land on all sides is barren with appalling desolation. "His long hair, foul from neglect, falls unkempt upon his emaciated shoulders; his dull eye contemplates a recent dream or a painful recollection; the filthy herd follows at his feet. His tongue is mute, but one feels that a long-drawn painful sigh is heaved from his panting chest. A tear rolls down his cheeks burnt with passion." This is, doubtless, a true, though an ugly, picture of the sinner who has exchanged the privilege of being a prince in his father's home for the condition of an outcast in the outhouse with the filthy swine.

And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger (Luke 15:17). We have been following the prodigal step by step until we find him almost on the brink of despair, when he reaches the outside limit of the career that had carried him farther and farther away from his father's home. How long he remained in the *far country* is not a detail of the parable, but this we do know—it was long enough for him to enter into himself and realize the waste of his misspent life amidst scenes of his abounding desolation. To him indeed may well be applied the telling lines of a great English poet, who with everything that fortune and rank and genius could give him and with his whole life laid out for pleasure and not for duty, yet having hardly reached half the alloted period of man, already exclaimed:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers, the fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker and the grief,
Are mine alone———"

How vividly these words express the long-felt sense of want that gnaws at the very vitals of the prodigal's soul! But his keen sense of the abject misery which has taken possession of him strikes still a deeper chord:

"The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze,
A funeral pile!"

Fortunately, indeed, over the prodigal, as over all sinners, there is the providence of a kind, tender, and loving Father. And the prodigal knew above all else that his father, though strict, was kind and considerate. *He entered into himself:* words of deep spiritual import which, better than any choice of rhetoric, enable us to understand that the beginning of his conversion had already taken place in the depths of his sin-laden soul. The grace of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to *convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment* (John 16:8), is now at work in his conscience. He is thinking sorrowfully of the past, looking back through the dim vista that separates him from all dear to him on earth; he beholds the vision of his father's home stand out vividly before him. There he sees the hired servants happy under the paternal rooftree; he sees them with bread in abundance and to spare; and he sees himself perishing with hunger. Comparisons are telling arguments, especially in days of desolation and misery. The blow fell, and he was crushed. He looks to the right hand and the left, but there is no

help for it now, and he can find none in himself. The visitation of heaven searches him like fire. Shall he harden his heart, wrap himself up in his pride, and set his face like adamant against the onset? In vain! He will but writhe, like the worm that is trodden upon by the heel. The whole vista of his chequered life lies here outstretched before him. He sees those idle, empty, unprofitable days—seasons of sowing wherein nothing has been sown save noxious weeds. At last his spirit is broken, and he bows, he yields to the inevitable, to the remorse that borders on despair. But it is a saving remorse. It is much more than what is so commonly taken for remorse—the loathing that comes when the pleasure palls—the heartache that is felt after excess—the rack of the mind and the disgust with oneself; all this is remorse. The pagan whose soul has never known the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, and the peace which surpasseth understanding (Phil. 4:7) can feel the sentiment as well as the Christian and as aptly express it; for it has been in all ages a ready inspiration for the poet and the moralist. But in the prodigal's soul there was something more poignant than mere remorse. What it is let the Psalmist tell: *Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. . . . Turn not away Thy face from me: in the day when I am in trouble, incline Thy ear to me. . . . In what day soever I shall call upon Thee, hear me speedily* (Ps. 50:13; 101:3).

In this world, as in the next, it is the turning away of God's face that gives to sin the remorseful pang peculiarly its own. Absalom, unworthy as he was, could not endure to be banished from his father's face. He asked to see him—and die if it must be—but to see him. *I beseech thee,* he said to Joab, *that I may see the face of the*

king; and if he be mindful of mine iniquity, let him kill me (II Kings 14:32).

Repentance has now set in. The prodigal is resolved to return with confession and prayer. True repentance surveys the past, considers the present, and scans the future. There is recollection of the past, realization of the present, and resolution for the future. All three play an important part in the change that has now taken possession of the heart of the poor prodigal under the divine influence of actual and efficacious grace.

His willingness to return to his father and humiliate himself by a candid avowal with heartfelt sorrow for all his sinful wrongs, is the most certain token he now can give for having broken with the past and parted for good with his life of sin in the *far country.* In a pithy phrase of St. Augustine: "He shows himself worthy, in that he confesses himself unworthy." There is surely nothing wanting in his heartfelt repentance, for true sorrow does not hesitate to act; it moves at once with the impulse of grace, as delays are never so attended with danger as in things spiritual. To halt in such a crisis would be to court disaster, encourage doubt, and give the enemy time to concentrate his forces. Hence the most prompt action is necessary if the soul trying to rise from the grave of sin is to live again the life of grace. The rising of the soul through repentance and prayer is, indeed, a sure proof that the whole man, with all his faculties, participates in the resurrection of his spiritual life.

How truly admirable is God's watchful providence in the life of the prodigal! Though he has forsaken God, yet God has not forsaken him; though he, indeed, had lost the heart of a son, he had not lost the love of a

father. Even into that godless country where the helpless prodigal, because of his base transgressions, was smitten, an object-lesson of God's avenging judgment, did his father's love follow him to assure us, should assurance indeed be necessary, that reverses of fortune are often the sole avenues by which the sinner must retrace his steps and relay his course along a safer and surer track. The Prophet Osee tells us that God hedges up the sinner's way with thorns that he may not find his paths; He will even make sin bitter to him that he may abhor it. *For she* (the sinner) *said: I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. Wherefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will stop it up with a wall, and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers and shall not overtake them: and she shall seek them and shall not find, and she shall say: I will go and return to my first husband, because it was better with me then than now. And she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they have used in the service of Baal* (Osee 2:5-8).

There was no time lost in putting his resolution into effect, not even in seeing his employer to demand the wages for his service. Therefore why tarry any longer among godless citizens and filthy swine when I was born for greater things? *I will arise and go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants* (Luke 15:18-19). He is not hindered by the confusion and shame which he must naturally feel at being a failure in his selfish venture. Nor is he going back in the hope of being reinstated in

his rights as a son, knowing that he had already received, and wasted in sinful revel, his portion of the patrimony. The only thought in his mind is to confess his guilt to his father and to be made one of his hired servants; then to make sure that this, his attitude, was sincere and true he will say to his father that he has "sinned against heaven" (a Hebraism for "against God") and "before thee," and hence does not deserve to claim the title of son.

How little did he realize that his father, all through the vicissitudes of his constantly shifting life, had loved him with a love so devoted and true that no new day dawned on his horizon when he did not look out through tearful eyes for some faint shadow of his son's home-coming! How long it took him to make that journey we know not; but this we do know, that when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him. Constantly looking forward to his return, he caught a glimpse of his coming in the evening twilight and recognized his son and heir. Even though the raiment of the swineherd, an unsightly symbol of his poverty and degradation, still covered the wanderer, instead of giving way to just resentment, *he was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him* (vs. 20).

But the wonderful story of love and mercy is not yet wholly ended. Now the father will not only restore his son, but will give a lasting token of his heritage. "Quickly" the servants are bidden to bring forth the first robe, the *stola,* or upper mantle worn by the nobility. The ring, with its signet, the insignia of a free man, is placed on his finger; the sandals are brought for his feet; and the servants are to put them on—the family sign that he is once more a lord in the house of his father. Yet

another token of the rejoicing in the father's heart, the calf, "the fatted one," for this glad event, is to be killed to give unusual festivity to the joyous occasion; for *this my son was dead and is come to life again; was lost, and is found* (vs. 24). The banquet of love and thanksgiving is made ready, and the father leads his now wise and grateful son to his place.

During the family rejoicing at the banquet, so continues the narrative, the elder brother was still in the field. As soon as he returned, he heard the strains of music with the mirth of the dancing, and he inquired of one of the servants the reason of so much festivity at the house. Being informed that his younger brother had returned, and that the calf, fatted in readiness for family feasts, had been killed to give an expression of thanksgiving for his safe return, he was angry and would not go in. Surprised that a younger brother, after so much misconduct, should be treated in so princely a manner, he became embittered and refused to have any part in the festivity. His father came to him and in a conciliatory tone reasoned with him on the propriety of all that he found fault with. The elder brother, in rather sullen language, gave vent to his pent-up feelings: *Behold for so many years have I served thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf* (vs. 29-30).

There can be no doubt but that bitterness and envy rankled in the heart that expressed such resentment. His father, however, showing no signs of displeasure at his attitude, but moved rather by his love and mercy for the

recovery of his lost son, reasoned with him in this touching appeal: *Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again; he was lost and is found* (vs. 31-32). The patrimony which belongs to you as the first-born has not been touched, it is not in the least diminished; and neither has your father's love, in the joy of this feast over your long-lost brother, grown one whit the less. Surely you cannot feel hurt that a kid has never been given to you when all that I have is yours. What is mine is thine. We wonder what the elder brother would have said had he known all that had already taken place while he was engaged in the field? Had he seen the first robe, and the ring and the sandals, with the other gifts which the father had lavished upon his prodigal son, what would he then have said when the mention of killing the fatted calf had caused him so much displeasure?

It was shortsightedness on his part not to join with his father in rejoicing over the return of his brother; it just goes to show how deeply the human element is ingrained in the individual when we miss the viewpoint of the supernatural. As his father so well said, there was no question of partiality, but rather the expression of a tender heart over the recovery of a very great loss. The time is sure to come, too, when the elder brother shall be given a just and bountiful reward for his long and faithful service; and that will be all the more lucrative since he has never squandered any portion of the patrimony that was to fall to him. *Thou art always with me.* No greater reward can be bestowed upon faithful correspondence with grace than to be always with God, to walk in His divine presence, and to feel His nearness

abiding in the soul as the light of our life. *I am thy reward exceeding great* (Gen. 15:1).

Commentators are unanimous in speaking of this parable as the pearl of all our Lord's figurative illustrations. This can readily be admitted, since God's mercy is said to be above all His works, and the parable we have just considered is primarily an exhibition of that most consoling and divine attribute. Where in the wide range of the world's masterpieces can anything be found, sacred or profane, that is so analytic yet so full of tenderness, so true to nature, so rich in grace, so obscured by shadow, so resplendent with light, as this master-sketch of Christ which has been before the world for well-nigh two thousand years and during that long stretch of time has not lost one touch of its rich and beautiful coloring?

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."

CHAPTER XX

EPILOGUE

A Divine Allegory

Judas leaves the cenacle. Jesus now freely speaks to His apostles. The new commandment. Peter's anxiety, his boastful confidence. Christ's timely admonition. Qualities of the vine. Christ, the true Vine. Commentary of SS. Augustine and Bernard. Josephus. The vines of Sodom. Separation of Judas. St. Cyril's comment. Jeremias and the vine. Christ's divine appeal. The Great Hallel. The High Priest according to Melchisedech. On the way to Gethsemane. The King enthroned. His farewell benediction. The King's death. His everlasting kingdom.

JUDAS had just left the Cenacle to *do quickly* (John 13:27) the deed of treason previously arranged between himself and the Sanhedrists on Mount Sion. Jesus, relieved of his presence as of some ghastly incubus, spoke His farewell discourse to those at table, then and there impressing them, as well as their successors for all time, with the necessity of loyal adherence to Him, their Lord and Master. How long the banquet of the Last Supper continued we cannot exactly determine; however, we are safe in stating that from its commencement, after the hour of sunset, until the end of the farewell discourse, about three hours had passed.

No sooner had Judas departed than our Lord exclaimed: *Now is the Son of man glorified; and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also will glorify Him in Himself; and immediately will He glorify Him* (John 13:31-32). During the interval that remained until Jesus gave the signal for the evening walk to the slope of Olivet, the last He would take as a free

man, He revealed to His apostles the immense treasure of divine love that welled up from the depths of His Sacred Heart. To St. John, among the evangelists, we are indebted for handing down the narrative of this sublime discourse. The time now remaining for Jesus to abide with those He loved was brief, indeed; and, for this reason, perhaps, He addressed them by that endearing title of *little children* (vs. 33), signifying by this token that, not many hours hence, they would be like little children orphaned of their father. A father who has already bestowed his last and choice gifts on his dear ones has also some parting words which, by way of counsel and encouragement, are reserved for the farewell. Jesus likewise waits until His best and most precious gifts are bestowed to impart to those He loves His sublime finale of love and consolation.

The tenor of His discourse reveals to His apostles a surprise for which they were evidently unprepared. He predicts in no uncertain words His departure, with the train of sufferings and trials therewith inseparably connected. With the solemn introduction of *a new commandment* (vs. 34), He introduces the exordium of the most memorable leave-taking that has ever occurred on this earth between those who love. This *new commandment* will be the final keepsake which they are to preserve as a most precious token to remember all that passed between themselves and Him. He gives them to understand that this token must ever remain as the genuine hallmark of true discipleship. Like a stately evergreen it must henceforth abide with them if they wish to keep green in their memory His lasting pledge of love for them, as well as their mutual exchange of love for one another.

A new commandment, He says, *I give unto you: that you love one another* (John 13:34). The statement He had previously made during the early part of the Last Supper that one of the apostles would betray Him had caused much anxiety among the rest, even after Judas had gone out into the night. To restore their calm and relieve them of any rash judgments among themselves, He spoke of the new commandment after Judas had departed. This might be aptly called the keynote of His farewell discourse, for through the entire sermon the idea of true love is constantly recurring like a minor chord in the air of some rich melody.

Here St. Peter interposed a question. Anxious to know what the import of this solemn leave-taking meant, he said to Him: *Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered: Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow hereafter* (John 13:36). As soon as Peter realized that it was of His death He spoke, he inquired immediately: *Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee* (vs. 37). Little did Peter know, and much less realize, all that his noble profession of loyalty implied in the events that were facing him that very night. Our Lord could so easily have replied to his inquiry, but He wished to treat His apostle gently, warning him meanwhile of the streak of human weakness in his character which, under the anvil hammer of satanic power, would reduce his boasted strength to the weakness of a broken reed.

The warning which Jesus gives to Peter was now for all. He plainly told them that all of them would be scandalized in Him that night. What a sorry return for all He had hitherto done in calling them to the apostolate! For, apart from Him, what were they but poor,

ignorant Galilean fishermen, practically unknown beyond the confines of their native villages! To them He had proved a friend in so many ways, and, most of all, in raising them up from the ordinary walks of life to companionship with Himself in the establishment of the messianic kingdom. To them he Had given power to heal the sick and cleanse the leper, even to cast out demons. For three whole years they had been the ones privileged to be His constant companions, and now, here is the return —you shall all fail me. *You will all be scandalized in my regard this night* (Mark 14:27).

Among them there was one who would prove himself the gallant exception. He could not be brought down to the level of the common. Thus did Peter think, and thus, too, did he mean all he said on that sad night when under Satan's preternatural sifting his loyalty disappeared like chaff before the wind. His generous but impulsive nature felt the sting of being included in the general downfall. All! Himself with the rest? No, not he! He knew himself so well! Our Lord said to him: *Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny Me thrice* (John 13:38)! Peter was not altogether alone in the overestimate of his strength; for did not all the rest feel and speak as he?

At the sign from the Master, the apostles rose from the table; and, while they prepared for the accustomed twilight walk in the Garden of Gethsemane, all being in eager expectancy of what might there occur, He addressed them for the last time. Reminding them of the imperative need of union, at least in spirit, on the part of those who love each other dearly and are sadly obliged to separate, He said to them: *Abide in Me, and I in you* (John 15:4). His idea was to bring before them the vital

necessity of the most intimate possible union between themselves and Him, as disciples with their Master, if they hoped to see their labors bear fruit and be saved from the destruction of the evil day. To bring home by a touching illustration how intimate the nature of this union must be, He made use of the beautiful allegory of the Vine and the Branches. For the choice of this, the last of His parables in the order of time, there are many reasons.

Chief among them we may mention that Christ had just previously instituted the Holy Eucharist, and under the species of wine had given the apostles His blood to drink in order that they might partake of that divine nourishment which came from the very source of Life Itself. Besides, they were familiar, all of them, with the nature of the vine, owing to its extensive culture throughout Palestine. From such familiar scenes as the vine-clad hills of their native Sion, He drew illustrations for His farewell lesson of love, now telling them: *I am the Vine; you are the branches* (John 15:5). The vine has properties all its own which go far to show our Lord's wisdom in the choice He made of this allegory in preference to any other. The qualities which so well fit the vine for its new spiritual significance in portraying the action of sanctifying grace in the soul, are in striking evidence when we call to mind the vital union that exists between the vine and its branches. Then there are other reflections concerning the properties of the vine which enable us to see how judiciously the theme of His discourse was chosen.

The vine-stock, or the wood of the vine, its fruit, its leaves, its culture, and its ultimate destiny furnish matter for thoughtful, spiritual reflection. The wood of the

vine is remarkable in all lands for its wonderful durability. We are told that some vines live for over two hundred years. To the untrained eye, the wood of the vine seems to have nothing to recommend it; and, having anything but a sightly appearance, it is, for most purposes, without much utility; but from this seemingly useless trunk, with its twisted bark, what wonderful fruit is produced! In the weather-beaten, rough appearance of the apostolic fishermen, we may be allowed to see something analogous to the rough exterior of the wood of the vine-stock. Surely, there was not much on the surface to recommend their services when the Master called them from washing their fishing nets by the shore of the Galilean lake. Neither had they anything in the way of distinction as a class, for their walk in life was generally frowned upon by what the world likes to call the social class of society. And yet, what men of power were developed from a source so unpromising—the mightiest in the world!

The fruit of the vine is, first of all, abundant. To this the Prophet-King refers to in the psalm: *Thy wife as a fruitful vine* (Ps. 127:3). Besides, its fruit is noted for its sweetness, for the delicious taste of the ripened grape is universally proverbial. Because of this, our Lord said to the apostles: *I have chosen you . . . that you . . . should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain* (John 15:16). And the fruits of their labors are with us to the present day, because we have our Lord's words for the prophecy that they shall continue, since He said that *your fruit should remain.* Only a brief period was required for the Gospel to penetrate into all the countries of the Roman Empire; for no sooner were the Pentecostal fires sent down upon the earth than

the apostles set out for the spiritual conquest of the universe.

The leaves of the vine. Scarcely anything can give more restful delight during the hot days of summer than to pass through a vineyard and feast one's eyes on the fragrant flowers and the luxuriant foliage of green along its vine-clad slopes. How providentially has nature provided the productive branches with large spreading leaves to shelter the ripening grapes from the too-intense heat and burning winds of summer, the sudden downfalls of hail, and the equinoctial rains of autumn! The fruit of the vine is intended for the use of man, to nourish his physical life and to mark, with red-letter days, the unusual and joyous events of his social life; but the leaves are serviceable principally for the vine itself. Thus it has ever been with the apostles and their successors. Their labors are fruitful for others as well as for themselves; but the sheltering protection which grace throws about them, while incidentally helpful to others, is intended principally, like the leaves of the vine, for themselves alone.

The culture of the vine. Vines need continuous care and skillful culture. Digging, planting, pruning, draining are the commonplace occupations in a well-cultivated vineyard. What constant care does the Church, following the example of her divine Founder, give to the select vine branches destined for the vineyard of the sanctuary! To this culture the best years of life are devoted; no pains are spared in caring for those who, like young shoots, are grafted on the true Vine, Christ, in the vineyard of His Father. Such assiduous care for many years may, to the superficial observer, appear seemingly uncalled-for; but before the sap can flow through the stem to nourish its own fruit, the branch must first of all pos-

sess this life-giving property from the source of vitality in the trunk of the vine itself. Thus we find the counterpart of the vine in the spiritual vineyard of the individual soul. Sanctity is not the work of a day. The perfection of a soul may call for the growth of a lifetime.

The ultimate destiny of the vine. Before the fruit of the vine can attain its final stage of utility, it must pass through the wine press; and the better the fruit, the more perfect will become the net result of its antecedent culture for its ultimate destiny. St. Augustine so aptly says: "It seems that we are doing an injury to the grape, but it is an injury which is a benefit." For, were the grapes allowed to remain on the vine after the last stage of ripeness had set in, they would begin to shrivel up and wither away; but when the wine press has done its work, the precious liquid comes in its abundance to be stored away in the vintage-casks for man's future use. All who are Christlike must, in one way or another, pass through the wine press of tribulation. *Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son* (Rom. 8:29). Jacob foretold of Him: *He shall wash his robe in wine, and his cloak in the blood of the grape* (Gen. 49:11).

In the ascetical works of St. Bernard many beautiful symbolisms are found to express what Christ intended to convey to His apostles in the similitude of the vine. He says: "The vine is wont to be propagated by slips, not sown; so Christ is the Vine begotten of the Vine. But that He should bring forth more fruit, He was planted in the earth; i. e., was born of the Virgin Mary." Then he applies all the features of the vine to Christ. "How," he says, "was the glory of Christ cut off? With the knife of ignominy. His power? With the knife of humiliation.

His pleasure? With the knife of pain. His riches? With the knife of poverty."

Christ calls Himself the *True Vine* because He has all the properties of the vine; and just as a true vine produces live branches and true grapes, so does Christ, by the influx of divine grace, bring forth true Christians whose lives are enriched with the fruits of virtue. He also calls Himself the *True Vine* by contrast with the false and deceitful vines which produce only wild grapes. Of such were the vines of Sodom, which had grapes only in outward appearance, but when touched they crumbled into dust and ashes, as Josephus testifies.* The Jews, in their infidelity and revolt from God, were compared to such vines. We read in Deuteronomy: *Their vines are of the vineyard of Sodom, and of the suburbs of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters most bitter. Their wine is the gall of dragons and the venom of asps* (Deut. 32:31).

The work of His heavenly Father is now described in John 15:21: *Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away; and every one that beareth fruit He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* About the vine itself Christ here says nothing. He speaks only of the branches, for He, being the Vine, is all-sufficient; whereas the apostles, being the branches, need all the spiritual assistance they can receive for their perseverance in grace. He who, because of an unworthy reception of the sacraments, fails to produce the fruits of grace, even though grafted on Christ the Vine, is in danger of being cast forth as the fruitless branch (vs. 6). The heavenly Father may take him away, just as He

* Lib. 2 de Bell. c. 5.

took away Judas that same evening from the communion of Christ and the fellowship of His apostles. Such separations have, time and again, happened in the history of the Church when, through a course of evil living, men fell away from the faith, and were afterwards plunged deeper into the abyss of heresy and schism. But they who are faithful in their adherence to Christ the Vine, and consequently fruit-bearing for life eternal, will be purged to the end that they may bear more fruit. Truly, indeed, must they pass through the fires of tribulation that, being purged not only from sin but even from imperfection, they will adhere more closely to Christ and eventually be more like Him. Thus was Peter, with the rest of the apostles, purged from a worldly notion of the messianic kingdom.

Now you are clean by reason of the word (John 15:3). *The word of God,* in the language of St. Paul, *is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the dividing of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow* (Heb. 4:12). Such is the power of the word of God in cleansing and purifying the soul of all the dross of worldliness and from every kind of carnal affection. The Apostles were the evidential proofs of how the divine Word influenced their lives from the time they were under instruction in the school of the Master; for, without exception, barring him who was taken away by the Father as the unfruitful branch on the vine, all were ready to go with Christ even unto death.

Abide in Me. This is the all-important outlook for the apostles, as well as for all who through them are engrafted on the Vine. This abiding in Christ means more than the mere profession of faith which, without the

fruit of good works of zeal and charity, is nothing else than the material presence of a dry branch still on the vine. It practically means that, if we abide in Christ by faith because of grace and love, He, in turn, will abide in us as the vine remains in the vine branches through a constant influx affording vital sap and nourishment for the production of the grapes. Hence Christ will give fruition productive of supernatural life in such generous measure to those who abide in Him that they will become efficient in works of charity and the acquisition of all other virtues.

As the branch cannot bear fruit. It stands to reason that, since the vine-branch draws all its sustenance for the production of grapes through the stems that are united to the parent-stock, and since we are mystically the branches engrafted on the spiritual Vine—Christ, unless we are intimately united with Him, to the end that we may partake of His nourishing abundance, we cannot be instrumental for the production of good works which are beyond the power of mere nature. The Council of Trent (sess. 6, cap. 16) explains this passage: "For since Christ Jesus is Himself the Head to the members, and as the Vine to the branches, He causes virtue to flow continually into them that are justified, which virtue always preceded their good works, accompanies and follows them, and without it they are not able in any manner to be pleasing to God and meritorious. It must be believed that nothing more is wanting to those who are justified, whereby, in those works which are done of God, they may fully satisfy the divine law according to their condition in this life; and they should be truly believed to have merited to attain to eternal life in its own time, if, indeed, they have departed in a state of grace."

For without Me you can do nothing. Nothing in the supernatural order is here understood; nothing in the production of the fruit of the Vine. St. Cyril notes that we are joined through faith and inhere in Christ as the branches in the vine, not merely spiritually, but also corporeally, owing to the fact that the vine is Christ's humanity, of which we are branches on account of the identity of the human nature. This union is especially in the Eucharist, wherein we are united and commingled with Christ, not only united as branches to the vine, but also commingled like melted wax with other melted wax. Wherefore, as Christ spoke of the Eucharist, saying: *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man . . . you shall not have life in you* (John 6:54), likewise here He speaks of the intimate connection between the vine and its branches. *If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither* (John 15:6). The Prophet Jeremias says: *I planted thee an elect vine, a wholly true seed, how art thou turned for me into a perverse vine?* (Jer. 2:21). Hence Christ is called the *True* (Hebrew, *Ne'ehman*) *Vine,* because He never forsakes His branches, but is constantly caring that they may receive the divine influx of grace to produce true grapes and the wine of virtue.

If anyone abide not in Me. Note here the force of the simile. Just as the unprofitable branch is lopped off from the vine, and cast outside the vineyard where it dries up and becomes withered, and is afterwards gathered into bundles and eventually thrown into the fire to burn; so, too, will the Christian who does not abide in Me by the good works of faith be cast out, to be separated from the communion of the faithful, the living branches of Christ. Then it is only a question of time when he total-

ly withers through loss of faith, *but without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb. 11:6), and consequently to do anything meritorious for life eternal. After death he is gathered with the rest of the wicked by the devils and cast into the fire of hell. The fate of the barren and withered branch cut off from the vine has its counterpart in what happened to the cockle at the end of the harvest; and so unmistakable is the obvious inference to be drawn therefrom that he who runs, as he who walks leisurely along, alike may read.

But our Lord will not conclude this beautiful allegory with such trenchant words of more than awful import. There is something else more consoling and encouraging to be said about the vine in the simile. This is the magnificent reward He holds out to those who, as branches, abide in the vine. If you *abide in Me.* Now Christ directs our whole attention to the work and the net results of the fruits of our fidelity through the grace of perseverance. If His words abide in our memory we may frequently call them to mind, if they are in our will that we may love them, and in our works that we may fulfill them, then, indeed, we may ask for whatsoever we wish and it shall be done unto us, because love—true love—can ask for nothing contrary to the will of the beloved. St. Augustine beautifully expresses our Lord's meaning by a touching simile: "For the branch which exists in the vine, if it could ask for anything, would ask for nothing else than to be kept in the vine, and by the influx derived therefrom to produce true grapes. Thus the righteous ask to be kept in the grace of Christ and to do good works, and this they obtain."

There yet remains one more consoling result from the union of the fruitful branch with the *True Vine* for the

final goal of their inseparable existence. *In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit and become my disciples* (John 15:8). When the branch is laden with fruit, the vine will glorify the toil of the husbandman. For the apostles the kingdom of Christ was to be henceforth the vineyard for the culture of their works of zeal for the conversion of the nations. They were to be sent into the whole world to clear away the weeds of idolatry and superstition from Gentile souls and plant in their stead the true vines of faith and hope and charity, leaving in their wake the worship of the one and only true God.

As the Father hath loved Me, He goes on, *I also have loved you. Abide in My love* (John 15:9). Thus, indeed, shall ye truly be My disciples by doing what I have done; yea, and should the necessity arise, even greater things shall ye do. A disciple is always an imitator. Hence it behooves him to imitate his Master. Imitators of Christ! Can the Apostles decline so sublime a mission? So perfectly did they try to imitate Him in the culture of His vineyard that the story of their zealous labors therein is the best proof of a perfect imitation; so sublime that, rather than live as branches apart from the vine, their imitation of Him was even unto death.

If you keep My commandments, He continues, *you shall abide in My love; as I also have kept My Father's commandments, and do abide in His love* (vs. 10). When one does the will of another, he gives indubitable proof that he intends to model his course of action, not on any personal choice of his own, but on the plan which the other has set before him. He strikes the keynote in his soul from a major chord to harmonize soul with soul in doing the will of him who loves him, proving in this per-

fect way his whole affection. Hear St. Augustine: "Love precedes the keeping of the commandments. For he who loveth not hath nothing from whence he may keep them. In what, therefore, He here saith He does not show from whence love is generated, but how it is shown, that no one may deceive himself by saying that he loves Him when he keeps not His commandments. By this ye shall know that ye abide in the love with which I love you, if you keep My precepts. He loved us first, giving us the grace to keep His commandments. This is the grace which is plain to the humble, but hidden from the proud."

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you (v. 11). The word *joy* has its own specific meaning. He does not say pleasure. Pleasure is in the *senses*, but joy has its proper sphere in the *soul.* This joy is twofold: first, it is His very own, and secondly, that of His disciples. If the vine could share the joy of the husbandman in seeing the rich cluster of delicious grapes, it would rejoice in this, that its branches are united to the vine and bearing such rich fruits; and as the branches, if they could, would likewise rejoice because they are united to such a fruitful vine for the production of grapes, so, too, if ye, My disciples abide in Me, the true Vine, by love, and I abide in you by grace for the fruit of your good works, then shall My joy be in you and your joy shall be full because you derive from Me the life of grace for the conversion of the nations. Listen to St. Bernard: "This is the true and only joy which comes not from a creature but from the Creator. Compared with this all other gladness is only sorrow; all other pleasure is pain; all sweetness, bitter; all beauty, ugliness. And a sure sign of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in a soul is spiritual joy."

This is My commandment, that you love one another (vs. 12). This love for your fellows must be in the measure with which I loved you, and My love for you transcends all human limits and measures; for it is no less than the boundless, illimitable love the Father Himself has for me. Hence He will call this new injunction by no other name than *My Commandment.* It is from above that He invokes this sublime motive of charity. Just as He loved us, so must we love others with the same divine motive. With what incomparable delicacy He leads up to what the sublime motive of this love should be! Reminding the disciples of what He has done for them, He gradually leads them on to what reciprocal love should expect from them. *Greater love than this,* He says, *no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (vs. 13).

I will not now call you servants (vs. 15). Coming from the lowliest walks in life, the apostles could never aspire to anything else beyond the condition of servants; yet He will raise them up to the honor of His own high estate by making them His ambassadors to the nations of the world. *You are My friends,* He continues, emphasizing this word, connecting the honor He has conferred upon them with the practical inferences He would have them draw from it. *You are My friends if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you* (vss. 14-15).

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain, that whatso-

ever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you (vs. 16). St. Augustine (lib.1.ch.17, *De Predestinatione Sanctorum*) understands by this choosing the predestination of God. The high honor of being called to the service of such a Master was a signal privilege far beyond the most sanguine hopes of these chosen men in the days of their fishing nets. Now they are His intimates with His power in their hands, the promise of success on their divine mission, the seal of predestination on their perseverance, and the crown of surpassing glory for their eternal reward. With their feelings deeply touched and their souls awakened beyond expression, the disciples were unanimous in their profession of faith and loyalty to Him who they knew came out from God.

Jesus, the great High Priest of the New Covenant, now lifted up His eyes in prayer to the eternal Father, uttering the most sublime supplication that has ever risen from earth to heaven. *Father,* He says, *glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. Now this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and now, glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory I had before the world was, with Thee. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world; Thine they were and to Me Thou gavest them, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee, because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them; and they have received them and have known in very deed that I came*

out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine. And, all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine. And now, I am not in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee; Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we also are one (John 17:1-11).

Christ likewise prayed His eternal Father that He would sanctify, not only His disciples, but also the yet-unborn myriads who through them would believe in His word.

Following the time-honored custom of reciting a hymn at the beginning and also at the close of the Jewish Passover, Christ and His little band next took that portion of the Psaltery known as the Great Hallel, which recalls the Exodus from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the proclamation of the Law, and the sufferings and resurrection of the Messias. At no time in Jewish history could the psalmody of David be sung with such obvious propriety as on that memorable and eventful night. With what intensity of feeling the Psalms of the Prophet-King visualized the scene that would be told adown the ages and which was to take place in a very few hours! David took in the scene from afar. Christ and the Eleven were the principals in that same scene now enacted before their very eyes.

Can we begin to realize what it meant to make melody in singing such sad words as these, and at such a moment in the history of the world? *The sorrows of death have compassed me, and the perils of hell have found me. I met with trouble and sorrows, and I called upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, deliver my soul. What shall I ren-*

der to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. Being pushed I was overturned that I might fall, but the Lord supported me. The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is wonderful in our eyes (Ps. 114-117). What imperishable memories, like a spiritual keepsake, are treasured up by recalling those Psalms with their divine association!

The hymn and prayer being added, naught else remained for the Great High Priest according to the Order of Melchisedech, the Predestined Victim of the rites of Aaron, but to supplant the ancient symbols by consummating the sacrifice, the clean oblation begun in the supper room, of which all others were but the distant types and the passing figures. Now into the moonlit stillness of an oriental night, the Eleven followed their High Priest and Victim along the winding path hard by the cultivated vineyards where the vines were already shooting forth their first branches, rich with the promise of the Syrian springtime; and gradually ascending the upland of Ophel, they came to the slope of Olivet where was the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the first chapter of this work we have studied the kingship of Christ and pointed out how, like the single thread of purple conspicuous among so many twisted strands, the light divine of the Christ is the outstanding feature in the parables and allegories of His kingdom. When He was born outside the city of David's birth and shepherd life, kings came from afar guided by His celestial light, to acknowledge His new-born kingship on the throne of the manger; but who will acknowledge His

CHRIST REIGNING FROM THE CROSS

kingship outside the city of David's royalty on the throne of the Cross?

Turn back the hands of the great clock of time. Come in spirit to the mount where the shadows are deepening and all is still. It is Good Friday, the day most memorable in the flight of time. A motley assemblage is gathered in the hillcrest city by Mount Sion. The king of day is risen in the fullness of his noontide splendor: and though the day itself is but half spent, yet he mysteriously withdraws his light to let the stars of heaven shine out on that noonday eclipse in token of the mournful reverence of creation over the death of its King—the King of Kings. The earth now trembles, its great axis staggers; how its surface sways like a ship caught in a storm! And as we approach nearer the scene we catch the discordant sounds, some of mockery, some of blasphemy. Rising above the din comes a voice, the voice of a suppliant, a tender, touching appeal from a servant to his Lord, from a subject to his King. Listen! *Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom* (Luke 23:42)! And now the reply from the King on His throne. Listen! *Amen, amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise* (vs. 43)!

Only a short time ago, this King had a reed for a sceptre. On His bleeding brow there still rests a crown, a crown of piercing thorns; His arms are extended to mark the unlimited possessions of a world-wide empire; His nailed hands and feet have sent forth their saving crimson stream. The thorn-crowned brow droops suddenly. The eyes that had been turned up to Heaven now look down—down for the last time to earth, resting on the gazing crowd with a look of love and forgiveness, tender and unutterable. Never again will an erring world wit-

ness such a sublime finale, or receive such a tender parting benediction. Our King is dead, and He died on the throne of the Cross with His title of King.

On that day the Jews shrieked with clamorous shock: *We have no king but Caesar!* O blessed irony of fate! Caesar, in the person of Pilate, his representative, acknowledged Christ's kingdom, for he wrote the title surmounting the cross: *Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judaeorum*—Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. Their King they rejected for Caesar. They rejected Him whose day Abraham and their fathers had longed to see. Their crime was not to be registered alone in the annals of the court of Israel. In the design of Providence it was to be entered in the doomsday record of a world-wide power, so that back to Rome, and thence to North, South, East, and West might the story travel how the Christ, the Son of God, was crucified on Mount Calvary outside the walls of Jerusalem. Long since has the empire of Caesar passed away, and today the names of all the imperial Caesars of history are heard only on the lips of scholars. Century after century has come and gone since then; and as we now near the closing cycle of two thousand years from that memorable Good Friday, we find the Kingdom of Christ still with us, His Kingship still above us, and our King still going forth to conquer centuries after the grey lichens have obliterated all the epitaphs of imperial greatness from the tombs of men.

Look back to Calvary through faith. Look forward to Heaven through hope; and, during the life interval which yet remains, let the love of Christ your King abide in the very depth of your soul. *Christus vincit*—Christ is Conqueror; *Christus regnat*—Christ is King; *Christus imperat*—Christ is Lord of All!

"Crown Him with many, many crowns,
The King upon His throne!
Hark! how the Heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy peerless King
Through all eternity!"

Laus Deo Semper!

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